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COMMUNITY STREET YOUTH TASK FORCE REPORT

ASSOCIATION of
AGENCIES for
TREATMENT and
DEVELOPMENT

Services working co-operatively for children and youth

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TASK FORCE REPORT**

BY
THE MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY
STREET YOUTH TASK FORCE

January 1990

AATD would like to acknowledge the support of the Ministry of Community and Social Services, the Regional Municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth and the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton and District in the development of this final document.



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CHAIRPERSON'S ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Task Force met for the first time on October 31, 1988. Approximately 30 community agencies from both the children's and adults' sectors volunteered staff time to proceed with the "job". At that time, there was heightened awareness about Street Youth in the community because of a series of articles in the Hamilton Spectator by Barbara Brown and Jim Holt. Such reporting to the community was continued throughout the year by Wayne MacPhail. CHML Radio and CHCH T.V. were helpful in publicizing the research project and associated events.

To proceed with a review, a group has to have more than its people resources. The Task Force was indeed fortunate in this regard. Financial assistance came from two primary sources - the Association of Agencies for Treatment and Development (A.A.T.D.) and the Regional Municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth assisted us both financially and by allowing staff to participate.

A.A.T.D. also assigned a staff person, Elske Eybergen, who ultimately I viewed as an associate chairperson; A.A.T.D. became the meeting location and administration centre for much of the work that had to be done. Both A.A.T.D. and the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton and District (S.P.R.C.) provided the necessary clerical support such an endeavour demands. Shurl Kocman and Caroline Eyk (from the S.P.R.C.) and Rhonda Jamieson and Sherry Riddell (A.A.T.D.) produced much work under demanding timelines. Throughout this project I relied heavily on the invaluable expertise and boundless energies of Gloria DeSantis of the S.P.R.C. The S.P.R.C. also hired two very competent researchers, Roberta Dimitroff and Ahmed Haneef who had previous experience in the area of Street Youth. Finally, I must mention two people who have lived what we are attempting to resolve, and who were willing to share their experiences so that the Task Force would keep a realistic focus - Mr. John Lane and Ms. Merika Belanger.

The process we used to do the work as quickly as possible involved regular large group meetings, smaller committees who met regularly and were productive between the large group sessions, and two retreats to "pull it all together".

Don Jaffray and Miki Beldman assisted us greatly by acting as facilitators for our final retreat. The names of the members of the various committees can be found on page (iii) of this report. In spite of this, I feel that I should indicate the chairperson of each of the committees - Veronica Taylor from Charlton Hall headed the Literature Review Committee and focused on Canadian research; Lou Agro from the Region led the Legislative Review Committee which had the unenviable task of making sense of many Acts and Regulations; the Accessible Services to Youth Committee was very democratic and proceeded without a chairperson; the Needs Assessment Advisory Committee was creatively chaired by Steve Reynolds of the Region. Lindsey George from the Region directed a Mapping Committee which examined the realities of agency linkage; Norm Mintz of the Hamilton-Wentworth Children's Aid Society had the Resource Committee do a subjective statistical review of the numbers of street youth; Gloria DeSantis helped the Research Committee understand the parameters of the research that was done.

A chairperson also needs colleagues who will provide realistic feedback and constructive suggestions throughout the process. Phil Warren fulfilled that role for me from an individual perspective. The Steering Committee (Gloria DeSantis, Elske Eybergen and Lindsey George) provided group support.

It would be remiss not to mention the contributions of the many youth and parents who came forward and expressed their opinions. All of the other efforts would have been for naught if this hadn't happened. I'm certain it took a great deal of courage and trust for these people to reveal some of their life experiences.

Following this statement is a listing of the Task Force members. Any group is measured not by how it handles its successes but by how it reacts to its difficulties. At times the Task Force's "pathway" took unexpected turns but the group responded appropriately and kept its journey going. Hopefully, all our efforts will help youth. We may never meet again as a working group but I'm sure we'll never forget this experience.

Respectfully submitted,

Bryan Schofield

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COMMUNITY STREET YOUTH TASK FORCE MEMBERSHIP

Bryan Schofield - Chairperson
Hamilton Board of Education

Literature Review Committee

Veronica Taylor, Charlton Hall

Legislative Review Committee

Lou Agro, Regional Social Services
Bonnie Buchanan, Chedoke Child & Family Centre
Cheryl Sikkes, Ministry of Corrections
Donna Sullivan, Arrell Youth Centre
Ted Yarmel, Regional Police Department

Accessible Services to Youth Committee

Dale Baer, Mission Services
Birgitt Bolton, Wesley Urban Ministries
Penny Burley, Alternatives for Youth
Brother Richard MacPhee, Good Shepherd Centre
Elske Eybergen, Association of Agencies for Treatment and Development (A.A.T.D.)

Needs Assessment Committee

Merika Belanger, Street Youth Representative
Ola Furda, Hamilton-Wentworth Roman Catholic Separate School Board
Glen Pittis, Cool School
Steve Reynolds, Regional Social Services
Eve St. Pierre, Wesley Centre
Joanne Scott, Wesley House
Elizabeth Szkodziak, Adolescent Community Care
Rob Young, Citizen Action Group

Resource Committee

Norman Mintz, Hamilton-Wentworth Children's Aid Society
Cheryl Sikkes, Ministry of Corrections
Lou Agro, Regional Social Services
Karen Craig, Alcohol Drug Assessment Services
Karen Pope, Wentworth County Board of Education
Ola Furda, Hamilton-Wentworth Roman Catholic Separate School Board

Research Committee

Gloria DeSantis, Social Planning & Research Council of Hamilton & District
(S.P.R.C.)
Veronica Taylor, Charlton Hall
Susan Caughran, Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic Children's Aid Society
Maureen Harmer, Regional Health Department
Bryan Schofield, Hamilton Board of Education
Penny Burley, Alternatives for Youth

Mapping Committee

Lindsey George, Regional Social Services
Eve St. Pierre/Birgitt Bolton, Wesley Centre
John Lane, Parent Representative
Elizabeth Szkodziak, Adolescent Community Care
Hilary Meggison, Child and Adolescent Services
Dale Baer/Bob Charters, Mission Services
Brother Richard MacPhee, Good Shepherd Centre
Elske Eybergen, A.A.T.D.

Steering Committee

Bryan Schofield, Hamilton Board of Education
Gloria DeSantis, Social Planning & Research Council of Hamilton & District
Elske Eybergen, A.A.T.D.
Lindsey George, Regional Social Services

Other Members

Dominic Agostino, Alderman
Art Grady, Hamilton-Wentworth Children's Aid Society
John Lane, Parent Representative
Terry McCarthy, Ministry of Community and Social Services

A.A.T.D. Staff - Elske Eybergen and Phil Warren

S.P.R.C. Advisors - Gloria DeSantis and Mike Pennock

Researchers - Roberta Dimitroff and Ahmed Haneef
Street Youth Data collected and analyzed by above researchers

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The Community Street Youth Task Force began meeting as a Task Force at the Association of Agencies for Treatment and Development during the Fall of 1988. Its tasks included the definition of street youth, determining the extent of the street youth issue and determining the unmet needs of street youth in Hamilton-Wentworth through the identification of gaps in existing services and the need for new services. Finally recommendations were made based on the collected information.

For the purpose of this project street youth were defined as young people between the ages of 13 and 25 years who for various reasons come to depend on non-traditional sources for their survival and acceptance. In many instances family, community resources and support systems are replaced by the streets. These youth spend 70 to 80% of their time on the streets.

Literature and Legislation Reviews

Among the most common reasons given for young people moving to street life are physical abuse, sexual abuse and parents having difficulties parenting. Living on the streets, many youth are exposed to prostitution, violence, drug and alcohol abuse, sexually transmitted diseases and malnutrition and frequently must "line-up" for meals. They may resort to stealing food in order to survive. The need for a co-ordinated (multidisciplinary) and holistic approach to dealing with the street youth population is immediately obvious.

The Task Force also discussed the challenges they face regarding different types of legislation. Highlights of the General Welfare Act, Young Offenders Act, Mental Health Act, Child and Family Services Act and Education Act were discussed and included in this report. Suggestions for changing aspects of the various Acts which inhibits appropriate programming for street youth were also debated and endorsed in the report.

Hamilton Context

Based on data collected from a number of surveyed agencies, there may be at least 350 street youth in Hamilton. There are an undetermined number of street youth with no agency involvement. There are no statistics available on this group. Surveyed agencies reported that street youth use alcohol, cannabis and cocaine more frequently than other substances. Prostitution and abuse in the family were other issues frequently mentioned by surveyed agencies.

A community mapping exercise was undertaken in order to document the experience of Task Force members in attempting to serve street youth. This exercise describes the community of services for street youth in the Region as understood from the experiences of Task Force members. It provided an opportunity to reflect on the existing service community and identify issue areas. The "picture" provided indicates the confusion and fragmentation of services for street youth. Three distinct continuums also illustrate where each agency is located relative to other agencies for the following aspects: types of

needs served, degree of contact with street youth and immediacy of service delivery. One of the many findings is that there are no services in Hamilton presently mandated and resourced to provide services only to street youth.

The Task Force created a summary of a Service Provider Symposium which highlighted perceived problems with youth and the family as well as with the larger system of services. Suggested solutions were divided into the following categories: prevention, intervention and legislation and the courts.

Conversations with Street Youth and Parents

Since data on life history and substance abuse were available through the literature and agencies, the Task Force decided to focus the conversations with street youth on their needs. Two methods were used to access street youth. First a public meeting for street youth was held at a popular hang-out at a downtown shopping centre. Free pop and pizza were provided. A few Task Force members discussed needs with the 40 street youth who attended.

The second method involved two researchers during the evenings of the summer months of 1989. They met with street youth on the streets and discussed their service needs. Twenty males and 10 females met with the researchers. The researchers recorded their data on paper immediately after the conversations, not during the conversations; this was considered to be too intrusive.

Both of these methods resulted in similar data. Street youth talked about their needs for shelter (including more permanent housing), money, employment, supportive and non-judgemental relationships with agency staff, adequate information about available services and food.

Parents of street youth were accessed through a local radio talk show. Five parents shared their stories anonymously with researchers staffing phones at the Social Planning and Research Council. Their major issues related to the need for available supports for parents dealing with crises and the need for self-help groups. Information collection from parents of street youth by the Task Force was never intended to be a comprehensive exercise; more indepth work is a necessity with parents.

Recommendations

The Task Force believes that the pieces of the puzzle needed to better serve street youth are outlined in the following recommendations. The Task Force recommends:

1. THAT ADDITIONAL FUNDING BE PROVIDED TO ENHANCE SERVICES FOR STREET YOUTH AND TO IMPLEMENT THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THIS REPORT AND THAT EVERY EFFORT BE MADE TO GET AND KEEP THESE YOUTH OFF THE STREET.
- 2.A) THAT A.A.T.D. AND THE REGION ESTABLISH A COMMUNITY-BASED TEAM TO PLAN. REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE TASK FORCE SHOULD BE INCLUDED ON THIS TEAM;

- B) THAT A COMMUNITY-BASED TEAM TAKE THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THIS REPORT AND DIRECT THEM TO THE APPROPRIATE FUNDERS AND POLICY MAKERS;
 - C) THAT THE TEAM BE RESPONSIBLE FOR DEVELOPING A PROCESS TO ASSIST THE COMMUNITY IN IMPLEMENTING THIS REPORT.
3. THAT AT AN INTERMINISTERIAL LEVEL A STANDARDIZED METHOD OF COLLECTING AND RELEASING DATA ON STREET YOUTH NEEDS TO BE DEVELOPED.
- 4.A) THAT STREET YOUTH SERVICES BE IMMEDIATELY AVAILABLE AND CLUSTERED IN ONE LOCATION E.G., ONE-STOP SHOPPING;
- B) THAT THE SERVICES BE AVAILABLE ON A 24 HOUR BASIS;
 - C) THAT THE BROADER COMMUNITY WORK COOPERATIVELY TO CREATE A CONTINUUM OF SERVICES TO INCLUDE CRISIS SUPPORT SERVICES.
5. THAT COMMUNITY AGENCIES/SERVICES REVIEW HOW THEY RESPOND, AND IMPLEMENT WAYS OF RESPONDING MORE QUICKLY TO THE NEEDS OF STREET YOUTH. THIS MAY MEAN CHANGES TO EXISTING SERVICES OR THE CREATION OF A NEW SERVICE.
- 6.A) THAT EXISTING ORGANIZATIONS WHO PRESENTLY SERVE STREET YOUTH BE RESOURCED TO ENABLE THE SEPARATION OF ADULT AND YOUTH SERVICES;
- B) THAT SERVICES BE MANDATED TO DEAL SPECIFICALLY WITH STREET YOUTH;
 - C) THAT CONSIDERATION BE GIVEN TO THE MIX AND LOCATION OF SERVICES THAT SHOULD BE PROVIDED IN A DROP-IN.
- 7.A) THAT ALL STREET YOUTH WORKERS BE REQUIRED TO HAVE A BROAD UNDERSTANDING AS WELL AS A RANGE OF SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE TO WORK WITH STREET YOUTH;
- B) THAT THOSE PROVIDING SERVICES TO STREET YOUTH BE PREPARED TO SPEND TIME ON THE STREET, WITH THE STREET YOUTH.
8. THAT IT WILL BE NECESSARY FOR US TO PROVIDE SERVICES TO ALL STREET YOUTH WITH SENSITIVITY TO THEIR RACE, COLOUR, CREED, SEXUAL ORIENTATION. SERVICES NEED TO BE NON-JUDGEMENTAL, WITH THE ABILITY TO BE RESPONSIVE TO EACH INDIVIDUAL'S NEEDS.
9. THAT PREPARED MEALS AND GROCERIES BE MORE READILY ACCESSIBLE, FREE OR AT LOW COST FOR STREET YOUTH.
10. THAT A TRANSITION HOUSE WITH FLEXIBILITY FOR LENGTH OF STAY AND STRUCTURE BE ESTABLISHED. SUPPORT SERVICES ARE NEEDED TO ASSIST IN MOVING TO LONG TERM ACCOMMODATION.
11. THAT A VARIETY OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING ALTERNATIVES BE DEVELOPED.
- 12A) THAT REGIONAL SOCIAL SERVICES GIVE GREATER WEIGHT TO THE STATEMENTS MADE BY THE STREET YOUTH AND ASSESSMENTS MADE BY AGENCIES AS TO THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE YOUTH;
- B) THAT THE DISCRETIONARY SECTIONS OF THE GENERAL WELFARE ACT BE INTERPRETED MORE CONSISTENTLY AND OPENLY.

- 13A) THAT THE ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA UNDER THE G.W.A. BE EXPANDED TO INCLUDE FIRST AND LAST MONTH'S RENT WITHOUT RECOVERY (PAYBACK), WITH THE LIMITATION OF ONCE A YEAR;
 - B) THAT THERE NEEDS TO BE MORE FLEXIBILITY FOR THE 16 AND 17 YEAR OLD POPULATION TO ADDRESS THEIR NEEDS, WITHOUT PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT;
 - C) THAT PARENTS OF 16 AND 17 YEAR OLDS SHOULD BE CONTACTED ONLY WHEN STREET YOUTH INFORMATION, WITH RESPECT TO THEIR NEGATIVE HOME ENVIRONMENT, CANNOT BE SUBSTANTIATED.
- 14A) THAT COMPREHENSIVE "HASSLE FREE" HEALTH SERVICES BE MADE AVAILABLE TO ENSURE STREET YOUTH ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE;
- B) THAT PROGRAMS BE DEVELOPED AND FUNDED TO ESTABLISH "STORE FRONT" AND/OR MOBILE HEALTH SERVICES.
15. THAT SERVICES FOR STREET YOUTH INCLUDE SHOWERS AND LAUNDRY FACILITIES TO ADDRESS THEIR PERSONAL HYGIENE NEEDS.
16. THAT RECREATIONAL ASPECTS OF STREET YOUTH LIVES BE INCLUDED IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SERVICES.
- 17A) THAT EMPLOYMENT/EDUCATIONAL INITIATIVES FOR STREET YOUTH ENSURE THAT ALL THESE NEEDS ARE ADEQUATELY MET.
- B) THAT YOUTH LIVING ON THE STREET BE INFORMED AS TO THE EMPLOYMENT SERVICES AND AGENCIES AVAILABLE TO THEM. THIS MAY TAKE THE FORM OF MORE AGGRESSIVE OUTREACH BY THE VARIOUS EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES INVOLVED AS WELL AS BETTER COMMUNICATION BETWEEN AGENCIES CURRENTLY SERVING YOUTH ON THE STREET AND APPROPRIATE EMPLOYMENT SERVICES.
- C) THAT AGENCIES CURRENTLY OFFERING SERVICES TO STREET YOUTH INVESTIGATE THE FEASIBILITY OF DESIGNING PROGRAMS TO MEET THESE MORE IMMEDIATE EMPLOYMENT NEEDS. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A LIST OF TEMPORARY AND OCCASIONAL JOBS WOULD BE ONE EXAMPLE OF THIS.
- D) THAT TRAINING INITIATIVES BE ENHANCED SO AS TO HELP YOUTH ACCESS FULL-TIME EMPLOYMENT AT THE END OF THE PROGRAM AS WELL AS PROVIDE A REASONABLE WAGE WHILE PARTICIPATING IN IT.
18. THAT SECTION 25 CLASSROOMS IN STORE FRONT PROGRAMS, OR OTHER APPROPRIATE SCHOOL ALTERNATIVES BE INCREASED.
19. THAT APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS BE DEVELOPED TO ACCOMMODATE THE SKILL DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYMENT NEEDS OF STREET YOUTH.
20. THAT OUR COMMUNITY ADVOCATE FOR THE PROVISION OF BASIC NEEDS SUCH AS ADEQUATE INCOME AND HOUSING FOR INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES.
- 21A) THAT TIMELY, COORDINATED SERVICE PROVISION BE STRENGTHENED FOR CRISIS ASSESSMENT AND TREATMENT, ESPECIALLY FOR THOSE AT RISK, USING A MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAM APPROACH;
- B) THAT THESE SERVICES BE EXTENDED TO REACH YOUTH ON THE STREET.
- C) GAPS IN CRISIS RESPONSE (E.G., SUICIDE, FAMILY VIOLENCE, SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND SEXUAL ABUSE) AND FOLLOW-UP SERVICES BE ADDRESSED TO MEET THE NEEDS OF YOUTH AND THEIR FAMILIES IN CRISIS.

22. THAT THERE BE PERSON(S) AVAILABLE TO RESPOND TO CRISIS OR EMERGENCY SITUATIONS ON A 24 HOUR BASIS, WITH ACCESS TO EMERGENCY BEDS.
23. THAT HAMILTON-WENTWORTH EXAMINE THE NEED TO ESTABLISH A TRANSPORTATION RESOURCE TO HELP STREET YOUTH RETURN HOME.
- 24A) THAT GAPS IN TREATMENT SERVICES NEED TO BE FILLED TO PROVIDE EFFECTIVE, APPROPRIATE INTEGRATED SERVICES FOR YOUTH AND THEIR FAMILIES;
- B) THAT STRATEGIES AND INTERVENTIONS FOR YOUTH AND FAMILIES BE SUPPORTED TO INCREASE PREVENTION OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE (E.G., SELF-ESTEEM);
- C) THAT SPECIAL DETOXIFICATION PROGRAMS BE MADE AVAILABLE TO YOUTH UNDER 18 YEARS OF AGE;
- D) THAT A RESIDENTIAL TREATMENT PROGRAM FOR "SUBSTANCE ABUSING YOUTH" BE ESTABLISHED, WITH READY ACCESS TO STREET YOUTH.
25. THAT EXISTING SERVICES FOR SEXUAL ABUSE BE SUPPORTED AND EXPANDED TO PROVIDE INTEGRATED, COMPREHENSIVE SCREENING, ASSESSMENT, TREATMENT, RESEARCH, AND EVALUATION; AND THAT COMMUNITY EDUCATION PROGRAM SERVICES BE DEVELOPED INCLUDING SERVICES SPECIFIC TO NEEDS IDENTIFIED FOR STREET YOUTH.
26. THAT INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP COUNSELLING PROGRAMS BE ESTABLISHED TO HELP STREET YOUTH 16 - 18 YEARS WHO ARE VICTIMS OF PHYSICAL, SEXUAL AND EMOTIONAL ABUSE.
27. THAT MORE RESEARCH BE DONE TO DETERMINE THE EXTENT OF PROSTITUTION AMONGST "STREET YOUTH".
- 28A) RELATIVE THE PROSTITUTION, THE DEFINITION OF "PROTECTION" IN THE CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES ACT BE INTERPRETED MORE BROADLY ON THE PART OF SERVICE PROVIDERS (INCLUDING POLICE AND THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM) WHO DEAL WITH THESE YOUTH;
- B) THAT PROSTITUTION AS IT AFFECTS YOUNG PEOPLE NEEDS TO BE ADDRESSED UNDER THE CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES ACT IN ADDITION TO THE CRIMINAL CODE;
- C) THAT CLIENTS OF THESE YOUNG PEOPLE SHOULD BE CHARGED WITH SEXUAL ABUSE OR THE APPROPRIATE CATEGORY OF SEXUAL ASSAULT.
29. THAT THE EXISTING CHILD WELFARE SERVICES BE ENHANCED TO PROVIDE ALTERNATIVE OR NEW WAYS OF DEALING WITH HARD-TO-SERVE ADOLESCENTS IN THEIR CARE.
30. THAT WE NEED TO CONSIDER THE DEVELOPMENT OF LEGAL MEANS BY WHICH YOUNGER, TRANSIENT YOUTH WHO ARE IN NEED OF PROTECTION COULD BE PLACED IN A TEMPORARY, RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT, IN ORDER TO PROVIDE SAFETY AND ADDRESS THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE CHILD, SUBJECT TO JUDICIAL REVIEW.
31. THAT A PROVINCIAL TASK FORCE BE ESTABLISHED TO CRITICALLY EVALUATE THE LEGISLATION AFFECTING YOUTH UNDER THE AGE OF 18 YEARS AND RECOMMEND WAYS TO ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF HARD TO SERVE YOUTH.

32. THAT THE JUDICIARY MUST FAMILIARIZE THEMSELVES WITH COMMUNITY RESOURCES AND BUILD THE USE OF THEM INTO THEIR DISPOSITIONS.
- 33A) THAT THE DISTRICT HEALTH COUNCIL ADDRESS THE SPECIAL NEEDS OF PSYCHIATRICALY DISABLED STREET YOUTH;
- B) THAT THE COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY HANDICAPPED ADDRESS THE SPECIAL NEEDS OF DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED STREET YOUTH;
- C) THAT THE APPROPRIATE FACILITIES ADDRESS THE SPECIAL NEEDS OF HEAD INJURED STREET YOUTH ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO ARE VIOLENT.
34. THAT PRIMARY PREVENTION SERVICES SUCH AS PROGRAMMING IN THE SCHOOLS AND SELF-HELP GROUPS BE INCREASED AND STRENGTHENED IN HAMILTON-WENTWORTH.
35. THAT THERE BE INFORMATION AND EDUCATION AVAILABLE FOR YOUTH ABOUT THE REALITIES OF STREET LIFE.
- 36A) THAT FURTHER EXPLORATION OF STREET YOUTH PARENT ISSUES BE CARRIED OUT;
- B) THAT THIS INFORMATION BE USED TO ESTABLISH PARENT EDUCATION, SUPPORT AND NETWORKING PROGRAMS INTENDED TO EMPOWER AND STRENGTHEN FAMILIES TO COPE MORE EFFECTIVELY WITH THEIR CHILDREN AND TO PREVENT THE ABUSE AND ABANDONMENT OF CHILDREN.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The idea of a Community Street Youth Task Force grew out of a Symposium of approximately 120 people held in Hamilton on Tuesday, May 31, 1988 (Avetissian, 1988). These people represented over 30 community agencies and organizations¹. The Symposium was chaired by Elizabeth Avetissian (A.A.T.D.) and her Committee consisted of Linda Bowen (Regional Police), Nora Dougan (Hamilton-Wentworth Children's Aid Society), Don Lester (Delta Lee Group Homes), Ann Scione (Wesley House), Joe Yurkiw (Hamilton Board of Education), and Eve St. Pierre (Wesley Centre).

The service providers attended the Symposium to discuss the frustrations of legislation and inadequate resources as well as the needs of a very difficult-to-serve population of adolescents. These youth are refusing therapeutic intervention and turning to life on the street. They have been described as youth who have run away from environments where they have been sexually abused, physically assaulted and/or neglected by their caretakers. Some of them are runaway youth who are throwaways due to new marriages or marriage failures. They are often suicidal or self-destructive in their behaviours and frequently addicted to drugs or alcohol. Some have been involved in juvenile prostitution or are in conflict with the law. They generally lack a source of stable income and do not have the basic vocational or life skills needed to survive independently in the community.

The Task Force was only one of the suggestions made at the Symposium; section 4.4 contains a summary of the symposium results. Since A.A.T.D. acts as a co-ordinating body for the Hamilton-Wentworth community by facilitating the co-ordination, planning and development of children's services, it was natural that A.A.T.D. would house the Task Force.

1 This symposium was not the first local level activity. In 1981, members of the Association of Agencies for Treatment and Development (Special Needs Committee) met, discussed and wrote a report about runners (Brigham, 1981). The Regional Food and Shelter Assistance Advisory Group also struck a working group in 1987 to explore what "street level" services could be developed locally for street youth.

The recommendations of this report can be realized only if we believe street youth should be helped and can be helped.

1.2 Task Force Terms of Reference

At the October 1988 Administration Team meeting of A.A.T.D., the formation of the Community Street Youth Task Force and Advisory Committee was approved. It was understood by the Administration Team that:

- 1) members to the Task Force have been selected from those individuals who have expressed a willingness or desire to participate on the Task Force.
- 2) the Advisory Committee has been established to provide additional advice and guidance to the Task Force.
- 3) while housed under the A.A.T.D. umbrella, the Task Force will follow the policies and practices of A.A.T.D.
- 4) the Task Force will report on a regular basis to the Administration Team of A.A.T.D.
- 5) A.A.T.D. will provide staffing to the Task Force. The Task Force is considered to be a working Task Force and all members are expected to contribute.
- 6) Bryan Schofield would be the chairperson of the Task Force and Advisory Committee.
- 7) the chairperson or his designate will act as media spokesperson.
- 8) the Task Force will consider the following as an outline of their task:
 - definition of street youth
 - needs survey
 - model development (if necessary)
 - a call for proposals (if necessary)

1.3 Task Force Purpose

The Community Street Youth Task Force's purpose is:

- a) To determine the extent of the problem in the Hamilton-Wentworth Community, and determine the unmet needs of street youth.
- b) To determine what it would take to get the street youth off the

streets, if that is what they want.

- c) To develop suggested ways and means of helping them achieve their personal goals.
- d) To identify the gaps in existing services, to assist us in developing the needed services in our community.
- e) The Community Street Youth Task Force sees as part of its mandate, the role of advocacy for recommended changes, as determined by the outcome of our meetings.

1.4 Task Force Goals

- a) To develop a working definition of street youth in Hamilton-Wentworth as defined by the Community Street Youth Task Force and the Advisory Team. The latter includes street youth and parent(s) of street youth.
- b)
 - i) by means of a needs survey to determine the number of street youth, the "wants" of street youth, the needs of street youth, etc.
 - ii) by means of a need survey and a service continuum, to determine the existing resources and the gaps in services.
- c) To recommend the development of a service model or models by analyzing data obtained from b) (i) and b) (ii) above. This service model will be comprehensive and reflect a continuum of service.
- d)
 - i) To develop a final report which encompasses the work of the Community Task Force - purpose, goals, definition, characteristic/profile, needs survey, service model, etc.
 - ii) To make suggestions concerning the implementation of the report.

1.5 Definition of Street Youth

The Task Force struggled with the definition of street youth for many months. The following definition is a result of each member's experience with the street youth population. This definition was used as a guide throughout this project. Appendix A contains a list of other groups' definitions of street youth.

Young people 13 years to 25 years, who for various reasons come to depend on non-traditional sources for their survival and acceptance are considered street youth. In many instances family, community resources and support systems are replaced by the streets. These youth spend 70 to 80% of their time on the streets.

Once a young person uses the street as the source of their unmet needs and undeveloped skills, they are at risk of becoming chronically dependent on the "street family" and therefore less open to intervention. When this occurs, the street no longer becomes the "helper", but the "victimizer". This developing cycle results in increased alienation from their own family, the system and increased entrapment by the street life.

A profile of street youth was also developed. The following characteristics were discussed and generally agreed to. There was recognition that the information below was not meant to be all inclusive.

- family breakdown
- physical/sexual abuse
- generally from the Hamilton-Wentworth/Burlington area
- have their roots and connections in the Hamilton-Wentworth area
- lack a healthy support network
- peer pressure
- school problems, lack of education, learning disabilities, behavioural disorder
- problems with authority figures
- unmotivated
- undeveloped work ethic
- little or no work skills
- move a lot, mobile primarily within the area
- some travel from place to place across the country
- alcohol/drugs - (if not in their lives, then often in their families' lives)
- some have been able to "survive" the streets
- street environment is better than the home environment

This report is about street youth in general. The Task Force recognizes the different types of street youth (e.g., runaways, runners, throwaways, etc.) but the collected data from the youth are not differentiated. The Task Force did not intend to separate sub-groups in this manner. The literature review section of the report is the only section which describes these different sub-groups.

1.6 Purpose of This Report

This report was written in order to pull together the results of a number of different Task Force activities into one document. It was anticipated that this document would fulfil the Task Force's purpose outlined in section 1.3.

Two researchers were hired through the Social Planning and Research Council to assist with the collection of data from street youth.² They also collected data from agencies about their accessibility to youth. Using independent researchers as opposed to agency staff, created the opportunity to interview agency-connected and agency non-connected street youth. Indeed a variety of youth were contacted. The researchers were also expected to refer youth to appropriate services if youth indicated such a desire.

1.7 Uncertainties

We are uncertain about the effects of a number of factors on this research. How did the Children's Aids strikes affect the research? What effects did newspaper coverage have on the research?

2 Funding for these two positions was provided by the Region of Hamilton-Wentworth and the Association of Agencies for Treatment and Development (refer to Appendix B for a copy of the budget). A chronology of Task Force activities is presented in Appendix C.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

This section focuses solely on descriptions of the street youth population. There was no attempt to gather information on treatment or causation models. There were some problems searching the literature because authors use many different key terms (e.g., street youth vs. runaways vs. runners, etc.). This section does not include a discussion of services for street youth or models used in other communities either (that information can be found in Appendix D).

There is little, if any, doubt that adolescents who run away from home in our society are considered a significant social issue. Since the mid-1960s there has been increased interest in and concern for the growing numbers of children who leave their parents (or guardians) before they are of legal age. Unfortunately, in recent years, there has been a tendency to perceive and perhaps even to dismiss this behaviour as a delinquent activity or as a mental disorder despite the fact that there is little agreement about the cause and meaning of this social phenomena. ... it is crucial to examine the larger, historical, political and economic context of running away (Libertoff, 1980:151).

After such an eloquent introduction to his article, Libertoff launches into a social history of runaway adolescents beginning in the seventeenth century. Other researchers (Johnson and Carter, 1980 and Orten and Kelts Soll, 1980) have also written about the adolescent street population from an historical and systems perspective. For example, in order to understand fully the street youth phenomenon, there must be an understanding of the family and its changing composition as well as the economy and changing labour force demands that may be placed on the adolescent population.

Much of the literature describes the life histories of the street youth population. Some of these articles describe this phenomenon without data but based on service providers' personal experiences (Luna, 1986 and Liaison, 1987). Other researchers collect data on this population and describe the reasons why adolescents have gone to the streets (Adams et al., 1985; Adams and Munro, 1979; Janus, Burgess and McCormack, 1987; and Ek and Carr Steelman, 1988); some

literature also attempts to categorize the street youth population into sub-groups depending on the reasons for their leaving home to go to the streets (Gullotta, 1978 and Brennan, 1980). In general, these reasons include friction in the lives of adolescents involving family, peers and/or school. Physical abuse, sexual abuse and uncaring parents are recurring themes in the literature. And Raychaba (1988) states a "definite link between one being placed in care and a far greater risk of becoming homeless" (p.65). Other research attempts to explain the pathways of runaways by measuring outcomes, the beliefs and expectations of runaways and their sense of control (Hartman et al., 1987).

Other studies do not focus on the life histories of these adolescents, but instead, describe this population as they live out their lives on the street (Matthews, 1987; Zingaro, 1987; and Goldman, 1988). General life style descriptors for these adolescents include: prostitution, violence, drugs and alcohol, mistrust of adults and "the system", stealing food, suicide, "lining-up" for meals, malnutrition and sexually transmitted diseases.³ Very little seems to have been written about the positive aspects of life on the streets; that is, some youth find more safety and sense of belonging on the street than they did in their home where they may have been abused.

Most of the literature cited above focuses on the American context. Since there are many differences between American and Canadian societies, some important details from three recent Canadian reports will be emphasized here as a context for the present study. The three reports are:

1. A 1987 report entitled "Adolescent Runaway: Causes and Consequences" (Janus et al., 1987) which was based upon the experiences of Covenant House in Toronto. Information from this study was supplemented with material from a speech made by the Clinical Director of Covenant House at an April 1989 general meeting (Freeman, 1989) of the Ontario Association of Professional Social Workers.
2. A 1987 study of adolescent prostitution in Toronto by the Central Toronto Youth Service (Matthews, 1987).
- 3 Service Providers from the Community Street Youth Task Force noted during a meeting, an increase in the number of under 13 year olds involved in prostitution in Hamilton-Wentworth.

3. A 1986 report of a survey of homeless youth in Calgary, Alberta by the Boys and Girls Club of Calgary (Kufeldt and Nimmo, 1987).

This literature was identified for the Task Force by Veronica Taylor of Charlton Hall. The results were analyzed by staff at the Social Planning and Research Council for the purpose of identifying common themes. The resulting themes are discussed in this chapter under the following headings:

1. Sub-Groups
2. Incidence of Abuse
3. Illegal Activities
4. Drug Use
5. Family Backgrounds
6. Social Service Involvement

2.1 Sub-Groups

"Street youth" are not a homogenous group - different authors have identified a number of sub-populations. The survey of homeless youth in Calgary identified two groups:

- "Ins and Outers" - Adolescents who absent themselves from home for shorter periods of time. In Calgary, this group left home on average of twice per year and stayed away for approximately two weeks on each occasion.
- "Runners" - Longer term homeless adolescents.

There were marked differences between these two groups:

- "Ins and Outers" were more likely to be females (73%) while "Runners" were evenly split by sex.
- 29% of "Runners" no longer knew where their parents were while this was true of only 6% of "Ins and Outers".
- "Runners" were more likely to report physical or sexual abuse in the home (37%) than "Ins and Outers" (25%).
- "Ins and Outers" were more likely to report communication problems with parents and parental alcohol/drug abuse than "Runners". This difference, however, may be due to the fact that a higher proportion of "Runners" had no contact with their parents.

- "Runners" were much more likely to have run from child care facilities (45%) than Ins and Outers (14%).
- "Runners" were more likely to have been approached to participate in prostitution (30%) than "Ins and Outers" (15%). Each group was equally likely to have been approached to participate in theft (27% vs. 25%), drug dealing (33% vs. 34%) and other illegal activity (14% vs. 12%).

Reports from the Toronto-based Covenant House utilized a different categorization for their clientele, as described below.

a) Young, First-Time Runners

This group is young (i.e., 16 years) and is on the street for the first time. They are typically running from a situation in a state of crisis. Services must intervene with this group within 24 to 48 hours or the client will be "lost to the streets".

b) Transients

Homeless youth who are travelling across the country looking for work are defined as transients. They usually find short-term unstable employment. They are on and off the streets depending upon whether or not they have a job.

c) Hard Core Youth

This group is composed of a high proportion of ex-Crown Wards, longer term homeless. They distrust social services and have had a high rate of involvement with the child-welfare system. They will use food and shelter services for survival. Incidental prostitution occurs but they are not yet "locked-in" to a dead-end lifestyle.

d) Walk-In Ex-Psychiatric Patients

These are young ex-psychiatric patients on the streets due to de-institutionalization. They have little contact with services and often use psychotropic medications.

e) System Independents

This group is the hardest to reach. They do not use Covenant House, have spent a long period of time on the streets and have a heavy involvement in

illegal activities. They are identified as a very "street smart" population.

2.2 Incidence of Abuse

Among the users of Covenant House, 86% of the females and 50% of the males reported sexual abuse at home. Physical abuse was reported by 90% of females and 74% of males. These results suggest that females are more likely to be on the streets due to an abusive family situation; however the number of young women and men experiencing abuse is significant relative to the general population. Young women are more likely to arrive on the street at a younger age (16 to 18 years) than males (18 to 20 years).

The incidence of abuse within the Calgary group was lower. Within the "runners" group, only 7% reported sexual abuse and 30% reported physical abuse. Among the "Ins and Outers" only 3% reported sexual abuse while 22% reported physical abuse.⁴

In 1984 the Canadian government published its findings on sexual abuse, known as the Badgely Report. These findings suggested that one in two females and one in three males will be victims of one or more unwanted sexual acts some time during their life and four out of five of these offenses would occur before the youth reaches age 21.

The most frequently cited Canadian statistic of child sexual abuse is one in four girls and one in ten boys under the age of 18 years (Grant, 1982). Further, nine of the twelve agencies surveyed in Hamilton during the summer of 1989 noted family abuse or family violence as the most common life history descriptor among their street youth clients (refer to Appendix I).

In her study of "Homeless Teenagers", Margaret Michaud describes why youth left home:

"All of the respondents spoke of leaving an environment which for one reason or another was intolerable. Reasons given for leaving home

4 Based on Task Force members feedback, it appears Covenant House data are more realistic and reflect general sentiments in Hamilton-Wentworth.

included sexual abuse, parental alcohol and drug abuse, and family break up.

A background of sexual abuse is now widely acknowledged in the histories of juvenile prostitutes. In Michaud's study 80% of the girls and 17% of the boys interviewed reported being sexually abused. In the Silbert and Pines study (1982) 70% of the subjects had a "forced or bad sexual experience", and 84.7% of these experiences occurred when the subject was age fifteen or younger. Sibert and Pines (1982) found 60% of the 200 adult and juvenile prostitutes interviewed were sexually abused. Of these cases, 70% involved repeated abuse by the same person."

The incidence of physical and sexual abuse in the general population is high given the Canadian numbers cited above; from the research like Michaud's that has been done, it seems that the incidence amongst street youth is staggering.

2.3 Illegal Activities

The probability that a homeless adolescent will become involved with illegal activities increases with the length of time that they are on the street. In the Calgary study, it was estimated that at least half of the permanent street youth survived by illegal activities. In Toronto, the incidence appeared to be higher - 57% of the Covenant House group had been arrested for delinquent activities and 43% had spent time in jail.

The most common illegal activities in both cities were petty thefts, alcohol/drug violations and prostitution.

According to the Toronto reports, male prostitution is as common as female prostitution although males tend to remain in prostitution for longer periods of time. Approximately 70% of prostitutes leave the street in six to eight months.

A related study of adolescent prostitution in Toronto highlighted the role of prostitution among adolescent runaways as a realistic and viable means of meeting basic needs for food and shelter. This is particularly true of runaways aged fifteen and younger - their age precludes them from employment and welfare. The primary factors which influenced an adolescent's decision to prostitute were

identified as the length of time they spend on the street, the intensity of their need for food/shelter and the influence of their peers.

2.4 Drug Use

Figures pertaining to the incidence of drug abuse among homeless youth were not available although it was identified as a serious problem in the Toronto group. The influx of "crack", in particular, was viewed as a causal factor in the increase in violence among street youth in that city. The Canada Youth and Aids Study identifies extensive substance abuse in youth. This is covered more fully in section 4.2.

2.5 Family Backgrounds

In Calgary, the "Runners" were more likely to have run away from two-parent families (34%) and child care facilities (45%) than the "Ins and Outers" (25% and 14% respectively). The "Ins and Outers" were more likely to have runaway from single-parent families (43% vs. 24%) and reconstituted families (17% vs. 12%). Among the Toronto group, 41% of clients came from two-parent families (natural parents), 31% from one-parent families and 23% from reconstituted families.

No information was available about the socio-economic background of the Calgary group, although the Toronto clients were judged to come, in the majority, from middle-class backgrounds.

2.6 Social Service Involvement

Both reports indicated that a majority of the youth had been involved with social services. The dominant view of services was negative. There was very little indication that traditional services were viewed as a source of potential help or assistance other than for the provision of emergency food and shelter.

2.7 Conclusions

The results of these three Canadian studies support the following general conclusions:

- a) The vast majority of youth on the streets are "running from" something, rather than because of an attraction to the "excitement" of the streets. In the Calgary study, for example, only 6% indicated that they had left home for the "fun" or "excitement" of the streets. This appears to be particularly true of the longer-term, hard-core street population. Most frequently, they are running from abusive family situations, child welfare interventions and residential facilities.
- b) The temporary street youth ("Ins and Outers") are less likely to be on the streets because of abusive family situations and are, consequently, more likely to return home. Within this group, communication problems and family disputes are more likely to be the catalyst for leaving home. This group is at risk of becoming involved in illegal activities each time they are on the street and this involvement can lead them into more serious problems of a "hard-core" nature.
- c) The group which appears to be at greatest risk are the younger street youth - particularly, those who are aged fifteen or younger. Their age precludes them from employment or welfare and their attitudes towards services prevent them from seeking assistance. A lack of options for this group, coupled with the pressures of peers on the street, predisposes this group to involvement in illegal activities.
- d) Traditional services have failed to intervene effectively with this population. Street youth have a high level of distrust of traditional service providers. Consequently, new and innovative approaches are required to reach this population. Among the service modalities which have been recommended are:
 - special outreach services
 - safe houses

- residential treatment services for substance abuse
- family counselling
- emergency food and shelter

e) It is important to note that some marked differences were apparent in the Toronto and Calgary results. Of particular note were the differences in the reported incidence of abuse - Toronto respondents reported a much higher incidence. Service providers whom the youth knew quite well collected the data in Toronto therefore more detailed and more personal data were more easily collected. In contrast, the Calgary study used outside interviewers. The higher incidence of abuse and other results pertaining to illegal activities suggest that Toronto may have a higher proportion of "hard-core" street youth.

This is consistent with a general perception that Toronto may be a "gathering-point" for street youth from beyond the borders of the municipality. Among the Covenant House group, for example, about 40% were not from Toronto - 20% came from elsewhere in Ontario and 17.5% came from outside of Ontario.

The fact that these differences exist, reinforces the need to gather additional information from Hamilton-based street youth prior to designing a local service response.

3.0 LEGISLATIVE REVIEW

A sub-group of the Task Force met regularly to discuss issues surrounding the legislation that affects street youth. The Task Force believed there were some changes that needed to be made to various pieces of legislation in order to make services more accessible and appropriate to the street youth population. This section of the report contains an overview and areas of concern for each of the following Acts:

- General Welfare Act
- Young Offenders Act
- Mental Health Act
- Child and Family Services Act
- Education Act

Information is also provided on alternative education programs in each of the three Boards of Education in the Hamilton-Wentworth Region as well as alternatives beyond the school system.

It is an accepted fact that all government agencies must work within certain guidelines as deemed necessary by legislation. Legislative barriers in general are usually inherent in any political system - Ontario law is no exception.

Governments in general usually pass legislation that is meant to serve the best interests of the public majority. But all legislation, which is aimed at social issues, comes with some restrictions in its implementation. The various Acts that affect youth concerns are no exception. The following information contains a condensed account of the various Acts and how they impact on street youth.

3.1 The General Welfare Act

a) 16 and 17 Year Olds

The General Welfare Act (G.W.A.) is quite liberal in providing avenues for addressing the concerns and problems of young people. However, some restrictions usually develop when trying to provide services, especially when dealing with the age factor.

Under the General Welfare Act, 16 and 17 year olds are classified as "adults", but in other respects, as in drinking or voting, they are regarded as non-adults in the eyes of the law. Within this age group of 16 and 17 year olds, certain conditions for eligibility may apply. Such conditions may involve youth that are married or separated, "kicked out" of the parental home, pregnant beyond 5 months, disabled, etc.

While there is permissive legislation to allow them to be assisted, at the "discretion" of the individual administrator, the treatment of the individual varies across municipalities from a broad acceptance of their entitlement to an almost total denial of assistance. A 16 or a 17 year old living in Hamilton-Wentworth has a right to apply for welfare provided there is a "need" for help. If an application is requested by an adolescent, parents are notified since their input is important for assessing and determining eligibility. Sixteen and 17 year olds can sue parents for support if forced out of the home against their will. These situations are rarely pursued through the court system.

The onus of providing support is removed from the parent if the 16 or 17 year old leaves home without justification; for example if an adolescent wishes to be on his or her own. Cases of this nature are usually refused, since these clients can often return home.

There is a need for someone to provide guidance, counselling and direction to young people who are often caught between the authority of a parent and the income maintenance worker who provides a public service role.

For General Welfare Assistance purposes, the legal obligation to support one's child is imposed by Section 31 of The Family Law Act, 1986. Under this section, a person has a legal obligation to support his or her natural or adopted child, so long as that child is under 18 years old or is enrolled in a full-time program of education. Certain exceptions apply.

b) 18, 19 and 20 Year Olds

While in most respects the 18, 19 and 20 year old is treated under law and welfare legislation as an adult, an anomaly occurs if the young person remains

in the family home. Although they have attained legal adult status, legislation categorizes this group of young adults as dependent children unless they leave home.

The word "dependent" refers to a child or young adult who relies on the head of the family for support and maintenance. The age range implied by the word "dependent" extends from 0 to 20 years of age for welfare purposes.

When a person under the age of 16 years loses his or her dependent status, the Children's Aid Society becomes involved with the child's welfare. When a 16 or 17 year old loses dependency, the local welfare office acts as provider at the request of adolescent. It should be stressed that welfare can only deal with individuals 16 years of age and older. This point is made clear and concise in the General Welfare Assistance Act. The only exceptions are cases that involve Foster Care allowances.

Applicants who are 18 to 20 years of age qualify for social services assistance in their own right. No parental involvement is initiated. However, if the applicant lives in the parental home, then no eligibility exists since he/she is regarded as a dependent. Certain qualifiers or exceptions can apply (e.g., disabled, pregnant, separated, etc.).

c) Conclusion

The General Welfare Act makes no reference to how aid should be administered. Most welfare agencies in Ontario, specifically in Hamilton-Wentworth, have developed their own internal policies and procedures for mandating welfare services. However, these agencies must adhere to the general interpretation of the Welfare Act and administer its' programs accordingly.

Sometimes this becomes a problem since some municipalities are stringent in their rules and how they interpret the Act. However, most municipalities like Hamilton-Wentworth are more flexible in their approach to the General Welfare Act and how it is implemented (compared to other municipalities).

Eligibility requirements for young people could be harsh or relaxed depending on internal policies and procedures for particular welfare agencies. The Ministry of Community and Social Services should undertake a special review to determine the status of persons 18, 19 and 20 years of age, living within a parental home.

It should be noted that eligibility for General Welfare Assistance should be based on "need" and not restricted to any special age limitations or other requirements. Eligibility for young people in Hamilton-Wentworth is usually available. This is due to the principal that in most circumstances assistance can be provided under the umbrella of "special circumstances" or "emergency situations".

Hamilton-Wentworth Regional Social Services has gone to great lengths to provide fair and accurate assessment of cases involving clients aged 16 to 20 years of age. In this regard, an attempt is always made to make decisions in the best interest of the adolescent.

3.2 Young Offender's Act - Y.O.A.

The Y.O.A. came into effect in 1985 as a replacement for the Juvenile Delinquents Act. The focus was on bringing an increased level of responsibility to young people while at the same time, recognizing their level of maturity. Youth between the ages of 12 to 18 years are addressed; concerns relating to those under 12 years are addressed through the Child and Family Reform Act while those who are older, who come into conflict with the law are dealt with through the Criminal Code of Canada.

a) Legislation Highlights

- Provision was made to allow for particular charges to be heard in Adult Court following a special hearing.
- Youth had to consent to treatment.
- Youth could be "cascaded down" through sanction levels (i.e., secure custody to open custody to probation) based on the level of rehabilitation and individual need.

- The Ministry of Community and Social Services continued to provide service to children between 12 and 15 years and the Ministry of Correctional Services to those between 16 and 18 years.
- Youth courts are held both through Family Court (Phase I - up to 16 years) and Criminal Court (Phase II - up to 18 years) paralleling the previous division.

b) Youth Rights Under the Young Offender's Act

- Legal representation.
- Consent to treatment.
- Involvement in case management.

c) Impediments to Professionals Working with Population

- There is disparity in access to resources for youth under age 16 and those 16 years or older.
- Client must be either awaiting disposition or serving a sentence.
- Restricted control is possible for older youth (16 and 17 year olds) due to other legislation (i.e., they do not need be in school or residing with parents/guardian, etc.).
- Legislation does not allow for the increasing level of detainment, (i.e., probation to secure custody), except in extremely limited circumstances.
- Limited resources are available for specialized treatment/counselling.
- There are often difficulties in eliciting appropriate assistance from the parent/guardian.

d) Conclusion

Several areas of the Young Offenders Act continue to come under close scrutiny and may be altered in the years ahead. Among them:

- mechanisms for transferring particular charges into adult court, and the maximum dispositions allowed for these charges.
- the issue of consent in regards to assessment and treatment for certain cases.
- a means to increase the mode of control for longer periods than presently available.

Certainly the legislation does not meet, in its entirety, the needs of all parties whether they be the offender, the parent or the community.

Parties are sometimes frustrated when front-line workers must balance the requirement of confidentiality for clients 16 years and older with the Young Offenders Act which underscores the responsibility of parents for the care and supervision of their children.

The court system is gradually being amalgamated so that all youth covered under the Young Offenders Act will be dealt with in one court.

The issue of equitable access to clinical services may be ongoing given staffing levels, funding needs and the ongoing effort to maximize the allocation of government funds.

3.3 The Mental Health Act

a) Highlights

The Mental Health Act was amended in 1986 to bring it in line with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and amended again in June of 1987 regarding treatment and substitute decision making.

The Act recognizes the rights and responsibilities of those 16 years of age and older. From the age of 16, a "competent" person has the right to refuse treatment, to access his/her own health record, and to refuse access of others to that record. The criteria for "incompetent" status is quite stringent and leans very heavily on the side of the individual's rights.

The Act does provide for "alternative consent givers" and involuntary admission but again, the criteria are stringent and there is provision for appeal and review.

The Act states that: "Where a physician examines a person and has reasonable cause to believe that the person,

- a) has threatened or attempted or is threatening or attempting to cause bodily harm to himself;
 - b) has behaved or is behaving violently towards another person or has caused or is causing another person to fear bodily harm from him; or
 - c) has shown or is showing a lack of competence to care for himself",
- and if in addition, the physician "is of the opinion that the person is apparently suffering from mental disorder of a nature or quality that likely will result in,
- d) serious bodily harm to the person;
 - e) serious bodily harm to another person; or
 - f) imminent and serious physical impairment of the person;
- the physician may make application, in the prescribed form, (Form 1), for a psychiatric assessment of the person".

b) Conclusions

It is extremely difficult, legally, to treat a young person against his/her will, quite aside from the question of the efficacy of such efforts.

Lack of resources in the full spectrum of Mental Health Services is quite alarming and helps to create an atmosphere of tighter criteria and less accessibility even for those wanting treatment. Individual, family and group treatment as well as life skills training, support groups and crisis management are in short supply with long waiting lists. Although this situation is not a result of the Mental Health Act, it cannot help but influence the "interpretation" of competency for refusal of treatment at all levels of decision making in the community.

3.4 The Child and Family Services Act

a) Highlights

This Act was recently revised and reformed (1985) in order to streamline the province's legislation that pertains to children. The latest changes eliminate inconsistencies, simplify the law and address new legal issues as they pertain to the issues of consent and treatment.

Since the question of consent is central to the social services system, the law clarifies what constitutes a valid consent given by an adult or child. The Act distinguishes between children 16 years and over, and those under 16 years. Parental consent is required for the residential placement of a child under 16 years. Children 16 years of age or over may consent, on their own, to all services provided under this Act, except those ordered by a court. At the same time, children 12 to 16 years of age are entitled to seek confidential counselling on their own. However, the counsellor must discuss with the child, at the earliest opportunity, the desirability of involving the child's parents.

The Act also allows for temporary care agreements which are normally mandated to local Children's Aid Societies. It also allows for services to special needs children who are sometimes placed in long-term residential care.

Based on a general review of the Act, it was found to provide a great deal of flexibility in the administration and structure of services. While moving toward greater flexibility in the provision of services, the Act recognizes that continuity and stability in the service system is essential to the well-being of children. Its paramount goal is to promote the best interests, protection and well-being of children.

The Act establishes six broad categories of children's services. These are:

- child welfare
- child treatment
- child development
- community support
- young offenders
- child and family intervention

Some of the key principles of the Act are as follows:

- Families that need help should receive support that strengthens the family unit with the least amount of interference.
- The least restrictive or disruptive course of action that is available and the appropriate steps should be followed.
- Children should receive services that are tailored to their needs.

- Indian and native people should be entitled to provide their own child and family service provisions in keeping with their culture, heritage, and traditions.
- Services shall, where appropriate, be provided in the French language.
- Children need stability.
- Children and parents should have the right, where appropriate, to participate in deliberations that affect them.

The new Act frequently directs courts and service providers to use the "least restrictive alternative" in deciding what action should be taken to help children and families.

Under the child protection section of the Act, various conditions are specified in which the state may, without the parent's consent, intervene to protect the children, e.g., in cases of physical and emotional harm, or sexual abuse.

The Act also allows for intervention on behalf of the child's best interest in matters related to court, custody and treatment issues.

Problems arise regarding rights of the child versus his/her responsibilities. There are also problems with how intrusive a service provider can be.

Children (under 16) who run away from home or a Society's lawful care are addressed under the C.F.S.A. There are provisions for child protection workers and parents to make application for a warrant of apprehension of runaways. On the other hand, the criteria under which such a warrant is granted often acts as an impediment for parents and workers since the act ensures the rights of the child. Child protection workers must satisfy the justice of the peace that there is reasonable and probable grounds that the child is in need of protection and a less restrictive course of action is not available or will not protect the child adequately. Parents must prove that the child's health and safety may be at risk if not apprehended. The assessment of risk is also an obstacle for police in apprehension of children. For the most part, runaways are reported to

the police as "missing persons". Warrants are rarely executed. The balance between child's rights, child's best interest and guardian rights is at best tenuous.

b) Conclusions

The issue of consent under the C.F.S.A. is generally regarded as a hindrance since it restricts treatment possibilities (especially in the area of mental health concerns). In Ontario, the law pertaining to consent issues of minors and parents seems to be unclear and confusing. As a result, service providers are frequently uncertain as to whether they are permitted to serve children without their "parent's" consent or even the child's consent.

Secure treatment, which may be preferred by parents and/or workers for helping troubled youth, may not be feasible due to legislative criteria for admission to such a program. This type of intervention is usually imposed by the court system and even then only in isolated circumstances.

The restrictions placed on apprehension warrants for runaways often induce frustration for parents, workers and police. The burden of proof that there be substantial risk to the child's health and safety can act as an impediment. The risks that are inherent in living on the street are not enough to justify warrants of apprehension which may infringe on a child's rights. Although the C.F.S.A. attempts to ensure children's rights and children's best interest, a conflict remains since these two ideologies are not always congruent.

3.5 Education Act

a) Highlights

The Act is constantly being revised. All students, whose parents are resident of a school area, have the right to attend the appropriate elementary school system (Protestant or Roman Catholic) or either secondary school system without the payment of fees. Students can attend secondary school for seven years but may be required to pay fees beyond that.

School attendance is compulsory in Ontario for children aged 6 to 16 years. Present alternatives to non-attendance within this age range are S.A.L.E.P.

(Supervised Alternative Learning for Excused Pupils), private schooling, home schooling, or a truancy charge against either the parent or child. The latter results in an appearance in Unified Family Court and can result in fines or probation.

S.A.L.E.P. is an educational alternative for students who have reached the ages of 14 and 15 years and desire to obtain work or volunteer experience rather than attend regular day school. Students can decide to attend school part-time or get involved with other continuing education programs. The application form is signed by the parent and principal of the school in which the child is registered.

Home schooling is a relatively new phenomena in Ontario. Under the Education Act, 1988, Section 20 (2) (a) - "A child is excused from attendance at school if he is receiving satisfactory instruction at home or elsewhere". The Ministry of Education sent out a Memorandum defining satisfactory instruction and how it is to be monitored. In effect, the parent is setting up their own "one room school house".

The programming for secondary schools presently comes from a circular entitled Ontario Schools: Intermediate and Senior (OSIS). OSIS provides for several other forms of programming to accommodate the individual needs of students - cooperative education, correspondence courses, independent study, private study, partial credits, etc.. Many of these are used extensively, however, some are under-utilized.

3.6 Alternative Education Programs in Hamilton-Wentworth

a) Alternative Education Programs in the Board of Education for the City of Hamilton

A.C.E.S.

A.C.E.S. (Alternative Concept for Elementary Students) is an alternative programme for middle school students (grades 6, 7, 8) who have the ability to be successful at their grade level but for one reason or another are not experiencing success. It is an individualized program which can also be complimented by a half day programme at a secondary school.

Lawrence Alternative Program (Secondary)

The goal is to help students develop skills which will help them cope with academic, social and vocational demands. It is located at Sir John A. MacDonald Secondary School which allows for integration into subjects otherwise not available. This possibility usually exists only at the beginning of a semester. Referrals can be submitted by the home school or by phone. After an information session and the admission interview, the interview team recommends whether the application be accepted or seek another direction. Enrolment is limited and a waiting list is maintained.

Phoenix Alter Ed (Secondary)

This is an alternative secondary school program offering academic subjects to meet the needs of students who are not experiencing success in the traditional school program. Students are recommended by the secondary principal and are interviewed by an Admission Committee. Enrolment is limited. Students who have been out of school may also be admitted on the recommendation of the principal of the school where the student last attended. The student must be willing to participate in all phases of the program and to sign a contract to that effect. Individual arrangements can be made for the student to take academic subjects at Phoenix and to enrol in a neighbouring secondary school for some business or technical subjects.

Continuing Education Programs

A wide range of courses for adults (16 years and older) are available through adult day school, adult night school and three adult learning centres (McIlwraith at 50 Murray St. West, Southview at 205 Queensdale Ave. East and Fairview at 150 Lower Horning Road).

b) Alternative Education Programs in the Hamilton-Wentworth Roman Catholic Separate School Board

St. Charles Extension Ed

St. Charles Extension Ed is an educational program for adults. Students must be 18 years of age or older and have been out of school for at least two years. The student brings with him/her any credits that have already been granted them and an individual program is designed at the student's level.

There are three campus locations (central, east end and mountain); thus students are placed in the program that is closest to their residence. There is no fee nor restrictions as it pertains to boundaries as far as where the student resides.

Peer Support Groups

At Bishop Ryan High School these groups help students experiencing difficulties with home, school, peer substance abuse, etc. It is voluntary.

c) Alternative Education Programs in the Wentworth County Board of Education Retention Program at Ancaster High and Vocational School

The Retention Program at Ancaster High and Vocational School which began in February 1989, is designed to prevent students who are perceived at high risk from dropping out of school. The students are usually 14 to 17 years old and have a history of underachievement and poor school attendance.

The program has two major components. During the first period, all students must participate in a guidance course which encourages self awareness and the acquisition of inter-personal and relationship skills. During the remainder of the day, students either work in the classroom on independent student courses or go into mainstream classes.

S.U.P.E.R.

Students Uniquely Prepared by Experience and Responsibility (S.U.P.E.R.) is a new program run through Orchard Park out of a store front in Stoney Creek.

3.7 Alternatives Beyond the School System

It is evident from the three Boards of Education that there are programs available that mix school and employment. In this section, such programs are described.

Futures

Futures is a job training program for youth between 16 and 24 years of age who have been out of school/work for at least 3 - 5 months. It is offered through the Youth Employment Centre and Mohawk College. The program may include 16 weeks of academic refresher and life skills as well as up to 48 weeks of on-the-job training. Youth are paid minimum wage while participating in the program.

Cool School

Cool School is a therapeutic program with an educational component run by Chedoke Child and Family Centre for adolescents.

WOW

Work Orientation Workshops help adolescents decide whether to continue their education or seek skills training.

Woodview/Canada House Day Treatment - Tri-Board Project

Woodview is a therapeutic program with an educational component housed in Westdale and Delta Schools.

Prevention Network

There are also some specialized programs offered through the Prevention Network of Hamilton-Wentworth. For example, small group discussions are organized to help students from separated or divorced families.

3.8 Concluding Thoughts on the Education System

- If street youth cannot avail themselves of the range of alternatives presently being offered by the school systems, what characteristics must new alternatives have? - "freer" settings, different criteria for success such as increased emphasis on life skills, shorter course units, flexible hours and timetabling tutoring, literacy skills, utilitarianism, accessible locations, etc. - a "storefront" school?
- The former have other components such as health and social counselling, teaching and supports in a hassle-free environment.
- Under present legislation, street youth whose parents reside in another

jurisdiction could be admitted to a local school only on "compassionate grounds" and subject to the availability of program space. Perhaps it is time for the legislation to be changed so Boards could receive grants from the Ministry of Education for enrolling such students.

- The Education Act demands parental authorization until the student is 18 years of age. This age limit is in conflict with other legislation and it too should be reexamined by the Ministry of Education especially for "emancipated youth who are living away from their homes".
- Ontario Schools: Intermediate and Senior Sessions (OSIS) - What sections are relevant to street youth and could be more fully used?
- Should an information pamphlet be jointly developed by representatives from the school system and the agencies concerning the rights and responsibilities of street youth with regards to education?

3.9 General Conclusions

Greater legislative clarity in the provision of necessary services to young people is needed. Help of one kind or another is available as long as the request is made (i.e., a fourteen year old youth does not have to be on street). There are mechanisms within the legislation to help this person off of the street. However, he or she must want to be helped. Thus, there is provision in the legislation for help but their access depends on discretion at the local level.

Services provided by way of various Acts of legislation for those up to the age of 16 years are fairly well co-ordinated (multidisciplinary) in regards to meeting the needs of the child while respecting the "family" structure.

Between ages 16 and 19, legislation, while attempting to continue to provide services, also presents obstacles in terms of balancing the involvement of child, family and community.

Despite the best of co-ordination, intent and legislation, virtually all Acts allow young people the right to choose their level of involvement particularly in areas such as treatment, education and life skills. This can impact greatly on their ability to live within the community.

4.0 HAMILTON CONTEXT

4.1 Overview

In order to understand and plan properly for street youth in Hamilton, it is essential that the Hamilton street youth population and available services for street youth be fully described. This section of the report contains three important parts.

The first part contains agency snapshot data. A number of agencies (approximately 21) were asked to estimate how many street youth they serve. They were also asked to report the incidence of child abuse, prostitution and substance abuse in this population. These data are key descriptors in the lives of the street youth population.

The second part contains a community mapping exercise. In this section a map of services available to street youth reveals the complexity of the system that street youth must make their way through in order to access services. A series of continuums places each service relative to others in terms of needs satisfied, degree of contact with street youth and immediacy of service.

The third section contains a synopsis of the proceedings from a service provider symposium held in May 1988. This synopsis includes lists of identified problems and suggested solutions.

4.2 Agency Snapshot Data

One challenge in attempting to clarify the specific needs of street youth, is identifying accurately the actual size of the street youth population.

One concern is that an operational definition of street youth is needed. The 1988 Canada Youth and Aids Study recognized "three patterns of living on the street: some youth literally live on the street, some intermittently run from the supervision of social services, and others live at home but spend a great deal of time on the street (p.110)." When workers were asked about the street youth they service, many responded in terms of "hard core" youth who live on the street.

Approximately 21 social service agencies that deliver programs to 13 to 25 year olds, who fall under the definition of street youth, covered areas relating to shelter, food, independent living programs, addictions, and legal concerns. In an effort to obtain some idea as to the potential population of street youth, agencies surveyed statistics available internally from January 1 to September 30, 1989.

Apart from problems in relation to the definition, in consideration of the visible numbers, the following must be emphasized:

- numbers provided may be estimates since agencies have not been set up to separate out the street youth population for research;
- some agencies that may be serving street youth were not surveyed due to time restraints in data collection. There was not enough time to follow-up on all agencies;
- some agencies do not collect statistics or cannot release data due to confidentiality (that is why none of the 21 agencies can be listed here);
- the percentage of overlap is difficult to calculate;
- based on front-line experience, it is believed that there is a second population of street youth who rarely or never come into contact with social service agencies.

Information available from Statistics Canada (1986) estimated the population of 15 to 24 year olds in Hamilton-Wentworth at approximately 69,300 (10 to 14 year old population estimated at 27,530).

Between January 1 and October 31, 1989, the survey of agencies indicated that the largest number of street youth serviced (without double reporting with other programs) was about 350 youth. In addition, 350 youth between 13 to 16 years of age were reported runaways (1,000 occurrences were reported through the Police Department Statistics) during this period. Reviewing the overall number of street youth from the numbers obtained from 21 agencies surveyed, there may be at least 350 street youth. There are an undetermined number of street youth with no agency involvement which is difficult to calculate since no statistics are available. At least 381 youth presented at Alternatives for Youth, Alcohol

and Drug Assessment Services and 7 other adult programs that collected statistics between January 1 and September 30, 1989. In Hamilton-Wentworth, for youth 13 to 25 years, there were 1,000 drug related charges between January 1 and October 31, 1989. At least 107 of these youth were identified as street youth based on the Task Force definition.

Agencies identify that alcohol, cannabis and cocaine, in that order, are the drugs used most often by their street youth population. Other drugs mentioned are hallucinogens (i.e., "acid"), amphetamines, solvents, heroin and prescription medications. Consistent with the Canada, Youth and Aids Study, alcohol and cannabis seem to be the primary drugs that are abused by street youth. This 1988 study indicated that "street youth heavily abuse alcohol and drugs" (45% use alcohol and 55% abuse drugs on a weekly or daily basis).⁵

Since the non-medical detoxification centres tend to serve youth 18 years of age and older, this may suggest a need that should be assessed further in relation to street youth. Similar to crisis intervention for suicidal behaviour, it is more difficult to presently access treatment without parental/guardian consent (and involvement of a family physician) when under the age of 18. If this is a difficulty for youth generally, it is more of a barrier to access crisis services for street youth.

Prostitution was identified by social services agencies. Between January 1 and October 31, 1989, 115 females and 10 males were charged with prostitution (13 to 25 years of age).

In summary, there is a population of street youth that have contacted services in Hamilton-Wentworth. There is also a group that have not contacted services at all and survive on their own. The literature review clearly identified issues for street youth related to alcohol and drug abuse, prostitution and family sexual and physical abuse. The survey of agencies

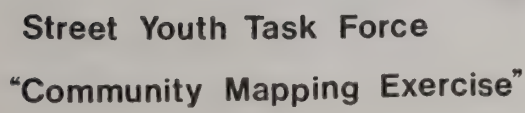
5 This information is more detailed here than in section 5.2b on pg. 63 of the report because in that section the youth were not explicitly asked about drug and alcohol use.

within Hamilton-Wentworth show that these problems are evident. Although it has been difficult to determine the upper limit of the number of youth on the streets, the Task Force believes the current estimates are lower than the actual reported numbers above.

4.3 Community Mapping Exercise

This exercise was a late addition to the work of the Street Youth Task Force. It was undertaken in an attempt to document some information that had been excluded from the Task Force's activities - the experience of the Task Force members in their work with street youth in the Region. A visual picture of the confusion of services and networks through which a young wo/man must travel to try to meet her/his needs has been created. The agencies at the centre of the picture are those that provide for the daily needs of street youth. This depiction is in no way meant as an evaluation of the quality or value of services being provided. The arrows describe referral routes. None of these services are organized for street youth only; however, Task Force members limited the description of the work of each organization to that support provided for street youth specifically.

A "Community Mapping Exercise" is a popular education technique that draws together the subjective knowledge of a community of interest. Usually the exercise would be done as a large group, in a lengthy workshop; however, because the decision to pull this knowledge together came late in the process, both individual sessions and small group work were used. The community of interest are the active members of the Street Youth Task Force and the description and analysis of the "Street Youth Community" is a reflection of the experiences of this group in working with street youth in the Hamilton-Wentworth Region. The exercise is useful as a component of the entire report and in assisting the Task Force to look critically at services meeting the needs of street youth. The Task Force hopes that this is a generally accurate assessment; however, it is acknowledged that this assessment will not necessarily be shared by those who did not take part in the process. This kind of exercise is a tool; a way of having and recording a conversation about what the Task Force believes to be true of street youth services in the community.



Although there are more than eighty services for youth in the Region, few of these services are being accessed by street youth on a regular basis. Rather, there is a "core" of services to which street youth turn to support their life on the streets. The visual "map" that has been created speaks primarily of the services supporting youth on the street. The gaps and limitations that have been identified cover the three areas: supporting life on the streets, assisting youth to get off the streets and preventing young people from becoming street youth.

One of the most important points raised during this exercise is that there are no services in Hamilton presently mandated and resourced to provide services only to street youth. The absence of street youth specific organizations in the community creates a confusing and fragmented maze of services through which a street youth must travel to meet all of her/his needs. There are a number of services regularly being used by street youth; however, these services are provided without adequate human or economic resources. Many existing services are not necessarily designed to meet the particular needs of street youth and they therefore fall short of what service providers believe will meet youth's needs, for example, street youth seek accommodation late at night. Agencies are chronically underfunded for the provision of services to street youth. As a result, a number of agencies are being stressed beyond the reasonable limits of service provision. The full range of services being provided by an organization suffer under these conditions.

A number of key issues were raised in the context of the mapping exercise:

- Some youth are getting "stuck" in emergency shelters because there are few alternatives for those who experience conflict in the home; youth frequently have to become chronic runners before they receive available services. Frequently what a young person needs is a safe, supportive environment where she/he can figure out what to do. There are few long-term beds and these are being accessed primarily by Children's Aid Societies. This situation is worsened because community agencies can no longer refer directly to group homes. Those providing emergency services are in a good position to develop trust with street youth because they are providing for their practical needs.

- A.A.T.D. is a children and youth co-ordinating body which has as one of its functions a screening component for available residential beds. A.A.T.D. is unable to respond to a crisis situation in a timely fashion. A.A.T.D.'s process takes a minimum of one week. The experience of other communities has illustrated the importance of reaching first time runners immediately to prevent them from becoming street youth.
- The stresses on families - separation and divorce, physical and sexual abuse of children, wife battering, alcoholism - are increasing the loneliness and disconnectedness that young people feel. They are looking for some form of family or community.
- There has been a 300% increase in reported suicides among 15 to 24 year olds in Canada (Suicide Canada - 1989).
- Street youth may access a variety of medical services - family practice, clinics or hospital emergency wards - but there seems to be a need for a street level health clinic offering a range of health services for street people which do not require O.H.I.P. coverage.
- Community agencies find they must do a lot of advocacy with Regional Social Services in order to get welfare for some youth. There is a feeling that it may be getting more difficult to get welfare. There are also disagreements between Regional Social Services regarding the assessment of potential recipients especially with respect to employability and the suitability of living at home for a youth under the age of 18 years.
- There is an increasing number of young people - psychiatrically and developmentally disabled, schizophrenic, and those with low intellectual ability - who are deinstitutionalized without adequate community support services.
- Agencies seem to be over-assessing when problems are acute, yet not engaging in long term planning at an early stage i.e., when problems are first identified, often as early as the primary grades.

- Young people are not empowered to take part in planning for their needs. There should be more self-help services and greater "consumer" participation.
- There is a need not only to undo what has been done to youth by families, but also by agencies and institutions. Specifically, disrespectful attitudes towards clients on the part of workers, incompetent workers, workers who abuse their position of power, and those with inadequate knowledge all may serve to create or reinforce mistrust, cynicism or feelings of powerlessness.
- There is a conflict between, on the one hand agencies with a need to "help" or serve, and street youth who are interested in survival. What agencies want for street youth may not be what they want for themselves.
- Funding dollars seem to go primarily to "treatment" services. There is a need for more non-treatment dollars to increase supportive living programs, crisis intervention, prevention and early intervention. Programs such as those provided by Adolescent Community Care Program are non-treatment, supportive services.
- Young Offenders and Child and Family Services Acts are problematic: there is little flexibility, a narrow definition of what constitutes danger to self (e.g., doesn't include drug abuse or prostitution), and one can't force youth to engage in treatment.
- The courts have increased the demand for paperwork from Children's Aid Societies.
- Once a youth reaches the age of 15 it is difficult to get him/her back into a Children's Aid contract if they have messed up. Once they mess up they have to jump through too many hoops to get help.
- It is difficult to get any 15 year old into the care of the Children's Aid Society.

The mapping exercise identifies a core of agencies working closely with street youth. The map also allows one to see where services that could be meeting some of the identified needs are being under-utilized. This may be for a number of reasons:

- Services are not accessible to street youth because of location, hours, waiting list or eligibility criteria.
- Services are not used by street youth because they don't know about them or don't like the way in which services are provided (e.g., judgemental).
- Services expect street youth to come to them rather than going to where the youth are.
- Agencies are not networking as effectively or working as cooperatively as they might. One of the strengths of the work of the Task Force to date is that agencies have already identified areas where they could work together in meeting needs and have begun to do so.

In the process of carrying out the mapping exercise, a number of limitations were highlighted:

- We, as a community, have a poor understanding of the needs, culture and values of street people, including street youth. It is particularly difficult to build trust because of their past experiences with social service agencies and because they may be involved in illegal activities.
- A number of issues are not being adequately addressed through this report, in particular, sexual abuse in the family and the revictimization that occurs when young people, on the run from abuse, prostitute themselves to survive on the streets. There are no services to begin to address the problems of sexual abuse of street youth. The Task Force has not yet addressed the connections between prostitution and drug abuse. Young women seem acutely vulnerable to becoming victims of violence on the streets.
- The work of this Task Force will not address issues of racism or cultural sensitivity in meeting the needs of street youth in our community. For

example, there were no representatives from the native community involved on the Task Force.

- Task Force members believe there may be an increase in the number of street youth who may be affected by AIDS, particularly as it is related to drug use and street prostitution. Members do not believe they have as much information as we would like about this issue.

An exercise separate from the mapping exercise was also carried out by a committee of the Task Force aided by the researchers. A committee of the Task Force met to discuss the services for youth listed in the Community Services Directory for Hamilton-Wentworth (Community Information Services, 1988-89) and adolescent groups in Hamilton-Wentworth (Buchanan and Pittis, 1984). The committee created a list of services that serve youth. The two S.P.R.C. researchers were then mandated to validate this list by contacting agencies.

The telephone interviews were carried out during June and July 1989 and focused upon three key questions.

- a) Is the agency currently serving street youth?
- b) Is the agency actually mandated to serve street youth?
- c) How accessible is the agency's service(s) to street youth? (i.e., how immediate can the agency's response be?).

In an attempt to analyze this qualitative data without losing sight of the range of services available in the community, continuums were developed. Each continuum depicts visually, the street youth services and their relationship to each other on three distinct criteria. These continuums and their results are presented below.

There are three continuums which contain all the services for street youth in Hamilton-Wentworth (refer to Appendix E for a complete listing of all the acronyms). The first continuum divides the services into the types of needs served. This continuum is based on a service needs classification developed by a local working group preparing a submission to the Provincial Municipal Social Services Review (Social Planning and Research Council, 1989). This working

group identified five components of this continuum: preventative services, basic needs, independent community living, social support and interpersonal needs and enrichment needs. The continuum for the present study also contains two additional components though. These are information needs and rehabilitative needs; these did not appear to fit neatly into any of the first five categories. The following definitions (from Social Planning and Research Council, 1989) are important for understanding the first continuum, titled Types of Needs Served.

Preventative Services - services designed to reduce the number of street youth through intervention before the child or adolescent leaves home for the streets.

Basic Needs - services designed to meet the basic needs for food, shelter and protection.

Independent-Living Needs - services designed to enable equal access to opportunities afforded by society. These services increase the capacity for independent community living and include employment, transportation, housing and home supports, sheltered workshops, life skills and child care.

Social Support Needs - services designed to improve interpersonal functioning within families, friends and other social networks. Good interpersonal functioning is a resource to individuals in coping with stresses and trauma. Counselling and self help are examples.

Enrichment Needs - services designed to facilitate the development of the individual's potential for creative and fulfilling activities.

The information needs category refers to services in the community that provide information to street youth on a number of topics including health and sexuality issues. And finally, rehabilitative needs category refers to services that assist people with substance abuse problems.

Continuum #1, Types of Needs Served, contains a list of all the services for street youth. Each service is listed under the heading for which it has a mandate to provide. This continuum shows that there are services available for each point on the continuum except for the enrichment component. It appears that there are services available to serve the basic needs of street youth but this continuum is limited in that it does not say how well these agencies serve

the 7 types of needs outlined. For example, do street youth know where to find the Community Information Service and how it can assist them? This continuum simply indicates that there are services and programs in Hamilton-Wentworth to serve the continuum of street youth needs (except for enrichment needs). The mapping exercise has already alluded to the limitations and gaps in the services.

CONTINUUM #1: TYPES OF NEEDS SERVED

PREVENTION	BASIC NEEDS	INDEPENDENT LIVING	SOCIAL SUPPORT	INFORMATION	ENRICHMENT	REHABILITATIVE
(Intervention before child/adolescent heads to the street)	(e.g., food, shelter, protection)	(increase the capacity for independent community living)	(provide social support and satisfy inter-personal needs)		(provide opportunity for creative & fulfilling experiences)	(e.g., drugs and alcohol addictions)
Hamilton Board of Education Wentworth County Board of Education Hamilton-Wentworth Roman Catholic Separate School Board Child & Adolescent Services CAS CCAS Regional Department of Public Health Services	A. Long Term Shelter Delta Lee Webber House CAS CCAS B. Short Term Shelter Good Shepherd Centre Martha House Mission Services St. Simeon House Salvation Army YMCA YMCA Webber House C. Food Good Shepherd Centre Hamilton Native Women's Centre Martha House Mission Services Operation Blessing Regional Indian Centre St. Matthew's House Wesley Urban Ministries Salvation Army D. Medical/Health Chedoke McMaster Hospital Hamilton General Hospital Henderson Hospital St. Joseph's Hospital S.T.D. Clinic Planned Parenthood Birth Control Centre E. Finances Regional Social Services F. Protection	ACCP AY Adult Basic Education Hamilton Board of Education CAS CCAS YEC Regional Social Services John Howard Society Mohawk Job Readiness St. Matthew's House Wentworth County Board of Education Hamilton-Wentworth Roman Catholic Separate School Board	ACCP Alanon-Alateen AA CAS CCAS Catholic Family Services Chedoke Child & Family AY Webber House John Howard Society Martha House Pastoral Counselling Centre Telecare Wesley Urban Ministries Regional Indian Centre Sexual Assault Centre NA Child & Adolescent Services	HANDS Public Health Nursing STD Clinic CIS ACCP AATD		ADAPT (Burlington) AY Alanon-Alateen Alcohol & Drug Assessment Services AA Women's Detox Bold Park Lodge Men's Detox NA Teen Challenge

Note: See Appendix E for List of Agencies and their Acronyms

Note: See Appendix E for List of Agencies and their Acronyms

The second continuum is titled, Degree of Contact with Street Youth. This continuum attempts to categorize all agencies and institutions according to the frequency of contact with street youth.

The first category on the continuum, indicates that no agencies or institutions in Hamilton-Wentworth have a specific policy statement about street youth included in their terms of reference. The second point on the continuum lists the agencies that have regular contact with street youth. These agencies and institutions see street youth daily or acknowledge that street youth comprise a regular component of their caseloads. The third point on the continuum refers to those agencies and institutions which have occasional contact with street youth. This refers to agencies and institutions who may see street youth less than once per month. And finally, the fourth point on the continuum lists agencies that do not currently serve street youth but may in the near future if funds for altered or new programs are approved.

This continuum indicates that none of the agencies or institutions in Hamilton-Wentworth have a specific policy statement in their Terms of Reference to deal with street youth. This is interesting in light of the first continuum which indicates that there are a number of agencies and institutions that serve the needs of the street youth population and that 13 of these have "regular contact" with this population. It is also noteworthy that a crisis telephone line and Public Health Nurse AIDS Educators are two groups that have plans to extend their degree of contact to street youth.

CONTINUUM #2: DEGREE OF CONTACT WITH STREET YOUTH

MANDATED (a specific policy statement is included in the agency's Terms of Reference)	REGULAR CONTACT (sees a pattern in service to street youth)	OCCASIONAL CONTACT (sporadic contact; fewer than one per month)	NO CONTACT (not currently but planning to expand services)
	Wesley Centre ACCP CAS CCAS Webber House Good Shepherd Centre Hamilton General Hospital Hamilton-Wentworth Regional Social Services Martha House Mission Services St. Joseph's Hospital Salvation Army	AY ADAPT (Burlington) Adult Basic Education Alanon-Alateen Alcohol & Drug Assessment Services AA Hamilton Board of Education Chedoke Child & Family Chedoke-McMaster Hospitals YEC (Citizen Action Group) Child & Adolescent Services Catholic Family Services Hamilton Native Women's Centre Henderson Hospital Mary Ellis House Men's Detox Mohawk Job Readiness Program NA Operation Blessing Pastoral Counselling Services Public Health Nurses Regional Indian Centre Reginald Gardiner Lodge STD Clinic St. Matthew's House Teen Challenge Wentworth County Board of Education YMCA YWCA John Howard Society Sexual Assault Centre Wentworth County Board of Education Hamilton-Wentworth Roman Catholic School Board Planned Parenthood	Telecare HANDS

The third continuum focuses on the immediacy of agency response to a street youth's request for assistance. This continuum divides the agencies that deal with street youth into five categories. The continuum refers specifically to the time taken for the youth to actually receive a service after it has been requested; it does not include the assessment phase.

The first point on the continuum is the most immediate response and is called drop-in. Within this category a number of agencies and institutions provide immediate services for street youth requests.

The remaining points on the continuum categorize agencies based on a response time that is not immediate and therefore a service requested by a street youth cannot be delivered immediately. This continuum indicates that the majority of services in Hamilton-Wentworth can provide an immediate or fairly immediate service for a street youth's request.

There are two main limitations to this continuum. First there is no indication of which agencies have waiting lists for programs and services. Immediacy of response is affected in a major way by long waiting lists. Second, there is no indication of the start and finish times of some programs. For example, does Mohawk College's Job Readiness Program begin and end at various times in the year? An individual could be requested to wait a few months if he/she requested this program a month after it had already started.

CONTINUUM #3: IMMEDIACY OF SERVICE DELIVERY

(NB - refers to the time taken to actually enter into the agency's "program" and does not include the assessment phase.)

DROP-IN	FAIRLY IMMEDIATE (registration required)	WAITING LIST <2 weeks	WAITING LIST >2 weeks	AGENCY REFERRAL ONLY
Alanon-Alateen	ACCP	ADAPT	Pastoral	Webber House
AA	Adult Basic	(Burlington)	Counselling	YMCA
Chedoke-	Education	Alcohol & Drug	Services	YWCA
McMaster	CCAS	Assessment	Chedoke Child	Catholic
Hospitals	CAS	Services	& Family*	Family
Good Shepherd	YEC (delay getting	Hamilton	Assessment	Services
Centre	actual employ-	Board of	Teen Challenge*	
HANDS	ment)	Education*	Child &	
Hamilton	Mohawk Job	Regional	Adolescent	
General	Readiness	Social	Services	
Hospital	Program	Services*		
Native Women's	Public Health	Wentworth		
Centre	Nursing	County		
Women's Detox	St. Simeon House	Board of		
Henderson	Planned	Education*		
Hospital	Parenthood	YWCA*		
Martha House	Clinic	Bold Park		
Men's Detox	AY	Lodge*		
Mission		Hamilton-		
Services		Wentworth		
NA		Roman		
Operation		Catholic		
Blessing		School Board		
St. Joseph's				
Hospital				
Hamilton				
Regional				
Indian				
Centre				
St. Matthew's				
House				
Salvation Army				
Wesley Centre				
STD Clinic				
(General				
Hospital)				
Birth Control				
Centres				

* Assessment required

4.4 Summary of Service Provider Symposium Results

On May 31, 1988, approximately 120 people, representing over 30 community agencies and organizations met to discuss street youth issues (Avetissian, 1988). This section of the report highlights the problems defined by the service providers and the second section presents suggested solutions. The details from the service provider symposium are an essential and important component of this needs assessment exercise.

This section was written based on content analysis of the entire document. Two Task Force members had already summarized these proceedings so categories of information were already available. The author of the proceedings was also requested to double check the summary to ensure there were no missing items (the Proceedings are available at A.A.T.D.).

Identified Problems in Hamilton-Wentworth

When the service providers were put into their small groups, they were asked to describe the problems with street youth. In an attempt to simplify the variety of responses contained in the symposium proceedings, two categories were created. The first category can be labelled problems with youth and the family and the second, problems within the larger system of services. These problems are not listed in any particular order.

a) Problems with Youth and the Family

- lack of education for parents about the modern social needs of their children (in general, parent and caregiver training).
- youth believe they don't want to be involved with "professionals".
- need to work with younger youth (e.g., grades 6 to 8) on life and social skills because some older youth don't go to school.
- high mobility of low income families due to poor resources creates instability.
- economic stresses and lack of incentive to work because welfare deducts money from the welfare cheque for earned money.
- youth get mixed messages from parents, peers and school
- need to foster self-esteem in youth.

- low school attendance because of issues at home, low income, no discipline, etc.
- lack of parental guidance and family support.
- lack of support services for families.
- multi-problem families do not know where to reach out.
- family abuse (e.g., sexual, emotional and physical).
- youth resist structured environments and restraints and refuse direction.
- drug and alcohol addiction problems.
- generational issues and communication gaps.
- cycles are difficult to break (e.g., "those running to" are difficult to reach but "those running from" are reachable with appropriate services).
- youth are being educated regarding sexual abuse but parents are not.
- lack of freedom.
- lack of awareness of community services by both youth and parents.
- lack of education - youth have misconception of how the streets will be an escape to freedom; street life is good!
- street youth lack significant relationship with a caring adult.
- youth avoid the system as well as their homes.
- living on the street provides attractive money; more than G.W.A. is able to give.

b) Problems within the Larger System of Services

- lack of education and information.
- lack of housing.
- service system is too fragmented.
- political will?
- need to reach youth at school rather than only those already out on street.
- system needs to be more channelled.
- hostel services will not take under 16 year old unless involved with other services.
- waiting lists in agencies and courts.
- concerns about inter-agency co-operation, networking, co-ordination (lack of multidisciplinary approach), communication, etc. which leads to services in isolation.
- "system" has failed the youth and does not plan for these youth.

- people feel intimidated with government services.
- problems with funding and timing guidelines.
- different values and cultures are not properly considered (e.g., native teenagers).
- service providers think of solutions that will suit them ("we're not sensitive to their needs" and "we don't know everything that happens on the street").
- lack of education around different cultures.
- judges give permission on "summary" matter for youth to have their own way.
- lack of trained counsellors in the school system.

Suggested Solutions

The symposium participants also discussed many different solutions to deal with the issues outlined above. Some of these solutions were preventive in nature and others were interventive and included both the service system, legislation and the court system. In general, there was a recognition that youth should be viewed in the larger context of the lack of jobs, social problems at home, motivation, minimum wage and welfare, and day care.

a) Prevention

Most of the groups discussed, at some point during the day, prevention-oriented solutions. How do we prevent youth from going to live on the street? Discussion centred around the need for early identification of high risk youth (i.e., those who may have learning disabilities?) and families (i.e., those in which alcoholism or family violence may occur) and the elimination of the severe problems faced by youth. There is a need to enhance the family unit and provide programs for young children to build their self-esteem. There is also a need to educate youth about the reality of street life. The schools and teachers, particularly grades 6, 7 and 8 are seen as an important intervention point. Nonetheless, preventive programs and supports should be offered at home to the family regarding a variety of "problems". Child care centres, cultural centres and recreation centres are other possible avenues for preventive-type services. Types of preventive programs could include after-school programs for youth and parents to educate parents and youth regarding problems and mutual needs as well as problem solving activities. Contracts between parents and children should be

used. Parenting, life and social skills programs were common in the discussions. The issue of agency co-ordination (i.e., a multidisciplinary approach) of programs was seen as an important issue here as well. A preventative network which addresses problems of children from single parent families is an idea; this requires involvement from other agencies.

b) Intervention: The Service System

Solutions suggested in this area focused on interventive strategies to deal with youth after they had already began life on the street; that is, going beyond prevention. The overriding theme that emerged from the symposium was the need for services that were more responsive to the needs and lifestyles of street youth. Professionals need to be very aware of family dynamics as indicators. In general, there was a perception that the helping agencies need to be better connected amongst themselves (including co-operation and co-ordination) and they need to be more flexible in serving street youth. Perhaps a primary worker (one person to deal with all the youth's needs) should deal with all other professionals in the field. Many youth are involved with a number of different agencies; there should be one place in Hamilton for youth to access services. Along with this is one set of workers that youth learn to trust and relate to. Finally, there should be emphasis on both experience and academic qualifications. Thus, workers should not only have professional skills but extensive knowledge of life on the street.

Four main components of a more responsive service system were identified. They are listed in order from the most frequently occurring response across groups at the symposium.

- Workshop participants discussed the need for some kind of street worker model or community outreach where staff work within the street youth's environment not the service environment. Street workers should assist street youth, through trusting and supportive relationships, to access "needed" services. There is a need for street workers to build long term relationships (a "stick-with-it" mentality). Advocacy should be part of this model.
- The need for a "safe house" was another frequently noted suggestion. A safe house should offer shelter and perhaps counselling but it is not a

hostel nor a locked custody-type facility. It should be non-threatening and non-intrusive to youth. There should be rules to follow but youth should feel like they can go and talk freely without judgement being passed. A reasonable length of stay should be permitted to allow the youth time to prepare to move on. Perhaps there is a need for co-ops and semi-independent living projects.

- A drop-in centre for street youth was also considered important. Participants believed a centrally located place, in a storefront setting, operating 24 hours per day, 7 days per week where youth could receive advice, information, referral and counselling was a necessity. Opportunity for peer support is important. Recreation could be used for therapeutic relationship building. An information hotline should be made available to desperate youth.
- Awareness about community resources and how to access them should be increased for youth and parents. As well, youth, parents, professionals and the public should be educated more about available resources and the reality of life on the street; there should be an attempt to dispel the myths about the "joy" of life on the street. Suggestions for youth education included activities through the schools including life skills and after school programs; perhaps after school programs should require parent participation. Youth should know their rights and responsibilities, available resources and what to expect. Suggestions were also made about "alternative education centres" (e.g., one-to-one teaching programs).

c) Legislation and the Courts

In general the Young Offenders Act and the Child and Family Services Act were viewed as anti-interventionist and required alterations. For example, they allow for intervention but many times do not provide the capacity to intervene in a manner which is least intrusive and most appropriate. Changes to the General Welfare Act were also suggested. There should be more resources available for youth and parents regarding certain legislation (e.g., Y.O.A.). More specifically there should be legislation clarification to allow for temporary restriction on younger transient children who are perceived by the community as vulnerable.

The courts are bottlenecked and do not connect young people with community resources.

Summary

The above details indicate that street youth must be seen within the larger context in order to redefine and develop responsive youth services. According to the Symposium results, the young individual, the family, agencies and institutions all have a role to play. A blueprint, based on needs identified by youth themselves, should be developed and co-operatively owned by all those with a potential role to play.

5.0 METHODS AND COLLECTED DATA FROM STREET YOUTH AND PARENTS

5.1 Methods

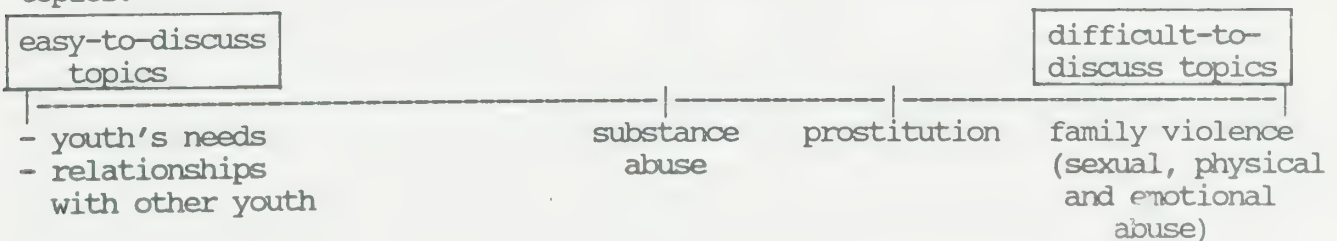
The Community Street Youth Task Force believes that in order to understand the needs of the street youth population, they must be asked about their needs. Service provider feedback is not enough. After a number of Task Force meetings discussing this item and a number of other issues, it was decided that data from street youth themselves and parents of street youth would be collected.

1. Conversations with Street Youth
2. Input from Parents of Street Youth

a) Conversations with Street Youth

In order to understand the service needs of any group, the group must be asked about their needs. Service provider feedback is not enough. Of equal importance is the input of representatives from that group in the actual design of a methodology to collect data. This section reflects the ideas of a young street person who became a member of the Task Force; she contributed many important details that assisted the Task Force in operationalizing the qualitative methodology outlined below.

Two researchers were hired, based on their previous experience with the street youth population, to carry-out conversations with street youth. The researchers were expected to gather information on the needs of street youth. Since the literature contained much information on life history and substance abuse, the Task Force decided not to make that type of information a priority. The researchers also did not need to ask and therefore move into shaky emotional territory about family abuse because the literature contains that information too. As a result, the Task Force decided to collect primarily easy-to-discuss information. The following continuum represents the easy and the difficult topics.



The Needs Assessment Advisory Committee of the Task Force met regularly during the months of May, June and July to discuss the details of the methodology. The method for collecting data from street youth was guided by a qualitative design defined in the text, Naturalistic Inquiry (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The technique of meeting youth on the street and collecting data through conversation had also been used in a similar street youth study in Calgary (Kufeldt and Nimmo, 1987).

The following process, based upon the naturalistic inquiry model, guided the study in Hamilton.*

It was critical to "be" with street youth in their natural environment because meaning is derived from both them as well as their contexts (i.e., agency offices were deemed inappropriate).

The "human-as-instrument" component was invoked through 2 researchers knowledgeable about street youth. The "human-as-instrument" is adaptable, can be holistic, can collect experiential knowledge and facts, can seek clarification immediately and can explore atypical responses.

Structured questionnaires were not used because they were too intrusive for this population. Researchers observed interactions, watched nonverbal cues, and introduced themselves as researchers and then engaged youth in conversations (without paper and pencil). Case notes were made after every encounter with street youth.

Purposive sampling was important. Researchers focused on sampling typical and atypical street youth, who were either agency-connected or not connected and who were under 16 years, 16 to 20 or 21 to 25 years.

Data were analyzed into categories after they were collected (inductive analysis from the data, not deductive analysis from a theory). Case examples were important to this methodology.

The study's design evolved - it was not firmly structured at the outset. A public meeting with street youth was organized downtown and then one-to-one-on-the-street conversations ensued. Research began in the core area of the city and then the researchers moved eastward after they realized they were seeing the same youth and heard there may be another pocket of youth out there.

Negotiated outcomes were necessary. Facts and interpretations were checked with street youth. They have a right to provide input on "proper outcomes".

Idiographic interpretation was appropriate and necessary for this study. In-depth data about the street youth in Hamilton was the focus - the study was not meant to be generalizable to other communities.

* This outline is not a complete outline or explanation of this model. The reader should refer to the text for this information.

In summary, data were collected from street youth via two methods. The first method was a public meeting held at the end of May 1989, on the rooftop of Jackson Square (a local hang-out), where free pop and pizza was served, while volunteer committee members mingled with youth and asked general questions about their needs. Approximately nine volunteers participated and about 40 to 50 street youth. Three main questions guided this public meeting. What would make life easier on the street? What do youth need to get off the street? What do youth need to prevent them from going onto the street? It was intended that these questions would give the Task Force information about the needs of street youth. Each Task Force member talked with youth by tailoring the questions to each individual and then summarized their case notes after the public meeting. The collected data were categorized into common themes. This meeting served as an opportunity to test and formulate the relevant questions and themes for exploration in the second data collection method.

The second data collection method saw the two researchers "hanging-out" on the streets in the core area of Hamilton and later the east end during June, July and one week in August. They established rapport, shared cigarettes and food, introduced themselves as researchers and engaged the youth in conversations (refer to Appendix F for a list of questions that the researchers used as a guide in their minds). After the conversations, they recorded critical information. Data for a few case studies were also collected. Approximately 30 youth were accessed through this method. Once again data were categorized into common themes. (For a more detailed description of the data collection method and analysis refer to Appendix G.)

The researchers were to make contact with agency-connected youth as well as youth who were not using any services. They were also to talk with youth under the age of 25 years. The oldest group (21 to 25 years) is referred to as transitional youth.

There were some limitations to the type of street youth who were accessed by this method. First, young female prostitutes were hard to reach for this study because their pimps have moved them off the streets into various forms of housing in order to reduce the chance of arrests. Thus their views are not

included in section 5.2. Second, the hard core drug users were not part of this sample either because they would probably not be "hanging out" with the other youth. And finally, the level of personal detail regarding incest, sexual abuse and prostitution was limited because the researchers were asked to focus on the needs of youth. Perhaps with a longer timeline on the study and the further development of rapport with the youth, the researchers may have been able to collect more information on life history variables.

b) Parents of Street Youth

The Task Force believed that it was very important to receive feedback from parents of street youth as well. Insights from parents would help provide an overview of the larger context of street youth as a major social issue. The parent of a street youth was invited to join the Task Force. He offered suggestions about how to reach parents and wrote his own story for inclusion in this study (refer to section 5.2).

A public meeting for parents of street youth (held at a neighbourhood-based multi-service centre) was organized for an evening at the end of June 1989. A press release was issued to newspapers, television stations and radio stations. Free child care was made available. About six Task Force members and the researchers attended this meeting.

The objectives of the evening were:

1. to understand the experiences of parents with the youth services system including successes and failures with services they actually used.
2. to list suggestions for alternatives or what is needed in the community from the parents perspective.

It was anticipated that some parents may arrive with a number of burning questions so plans were developed for a follow-up information session, if necessary.

Unfortunately no parents arrived for the meeting at the neighbourhood house. The Task Force members hypothesized reasons for the lack of attendance. First, perhaps a public meeting was not an appropriate method for collecting

information from people who may have unresolved issues. These parents may not have wanted to discuss this topic freely. Second, the press releases should have been "talked-up" more to the media to ensure better promotion. Third, it was a hot, humid June evening - perhaps it was bad timing. Fourth, for some parents, their children may have become part of the child welfare system long ago and they have since given up hope or be less motivated to attend such a session. Fifth, perhaps it is too painful for parents to relive these experiences. And finally, perhaps parents of street youth do not care about them.

Despite these reasons, an alternate strategy was developed in an attempt to secure parent input. A radio talk show was planned for August 16 with CHML in Hamilton. The Needs Assessment Committee of the Task Force believed that a radio program where listeners could phone-in would provide much greater anonymity than the public meeting. It was also planned that the phones at the Social Planning and Research Council would be available for the remainder of that day and evening to take other calls that did not make it through to the radio program. The objectives developed for the public meeting guided this activity as well. Approximately 13 people phoned the radio station or the Council and data were collected from 5 parents who had street youth.

These data were analyzed as case studies. There was no attempt to categorize data into common themes because there were too few respondents. Leaving the data as case studies produced more meaningful results.

c) Summary of Data Collection Methods

Item	Who Contacted	Method of Data Collection	Number of Respondents
6.1 Conversations with Street Youth	Street Youth	a) public meeting downtown	40 to 50
		b) one-to-one conversations on streets, in coffee shops, etc.	30
		c) life histories	2
6.2 Parents of Street Youth	Parents	a) public meeting at multi-service centre	0
		b) radio talk show and phone-in	total of 13 (5 were meaningful to the study)
		c) one parent's story	1

5.2 Findings

This section of findings is separated into four parts. The first part presents the findings of the public meeting for street youth held in downtown Hamilton on May 25, 1989. The second part presents the findings of the June and July "needs" conversations that the researchers had with street youth on the streets, in coffee shops, etc.. The third part contains two life histories of youth living on the street in Hamilton and the fourth part contains information from parents.

It is important to remember that youth did not easily disclose information that was painful to them (e.g., family sexual abuse). And it was difficult to access those likely involved in prostitution and/or drug use; there was a risk involved in approaching pimps and drug pushers because of the potential for violence. Substance abuse was not an item that youth talked about easily so descriptors of substance use were collected from agencies, not the youth.

a) Street Youth Public Meeting

The downtown site was chosen because it was a frequent meeting place for street youth. Approximately 40 to 50 street youth attended this meeting. Approximately 10 young women attended. The majority of youth indicated that the

availability of free pizza and pop was a major factor in their coming to the meeting.

The youth and the facilitators (i.e., Task Force members) indicated that they felt relaxed and comfortable. The Task Force members encouraged this atmosphere by avoiding personal and probing questions. In general, the youth were very open and co-operative, and many of them willingly volunteered personal information as well as assisted in the clean-up at the end of the evening.

The Task Force members recorded notes of each conversation and summarized them. The notes from each member are attached as Appendix H. Following here is a synopsis of these members notes. There was a great deal of overlap among the findings of the individual Task Force members. The youth appear to share some common concerns despite their unique situations (i.e., on the street and staying; on the street and wanting off; or at risk of going on the street). These central themes are summarized below.

Shelter - The issue of shelter was a recurring theme at the forum. The youth were generally aware of the available shelter facilities but the problem of access was cited by those youth under the age of 16 years. As well, the youth often found the shelters too restrictive in their rules. There was some concern about cleanliness and personal safety.

The youth appeared to be interested in a clean, safe and easily accessible residence where they might receive food, clothing, etc.. "Caring" staff was of high priority. Although the youth recognized the need for some "rules", they did not want to be "hassled" or "pigeon-holed" into a program as a condition of staying at the residence.

Money - The youth identified a lack of funds as a major obstacle to the fulfilment of their needs. They commented that welfare was both inadequate and unavailable for many youth on the street. The "catch-22" of needing a residence in order to receive welfare and needing money (i.e., welfare) to get a place to live was a source of great frustration for many youth. The difficulty in accessing welfare for those youth under the age of 16 years was also a major

concern. And those youth between the ages of 16 and 18 years, did not understand why their parents should be contacted in order to receive welfare. If their parents agree to let them come home and they are unwilling to go, they are denied benefits.

Employment - Most youth would like to work but often found acceptable jobs inaccessible. By acceptable, they intended one of two things: 1) a job that provided them with a skill so that they could progress in the workplace; and/or 2) a "high paying" job (unfortunately "high paying" was not clearly defined).

Support - Most of the youth who were present at the meeting stated that having "someone who cared" was a high priority in meeting their needs. By this, they did not mean a formal "counsellor" who was willing to help them change or work through "their problems". Rather they wanted someone who would listen and provide support in a non-judgemental, non-intrusive manner. They negated the need for "programming" as such and instead focused on wanting to develop trusting relationships. They cited the facilitators at the meeting as genuinely interested and "caring" because they were there on their own time. Ex-street youth or someone who understands life on the streets could also fill such a role.

Clearly, this was the most frequently expressed need at the meeting. Those youth who did not overtly indicate this in their words often implied it in their actions and reactions to the facilitators and the meeting. The issue of support for street youth appears to be one that should be placed high on any agenda for change.

Information - The youth appeared to lack basic information about the community services available to them in Hamilton. They were primarily aware of services such as Wesley Urban Ministries, the emergency shelters and welfare. Many expressed a desire for a downtown service where they could go to get information about the resources available to them. Newsletters were also suggested.

Other - The street youth also mentioned services such as free medical facilities, places to wash clothes, a place to eat, recreation, etc. They

commented that a facility that provided such services would be helpful and that it should also be "hassle-free". Again, the reluctance to become involved in formal programming was made clear.

Overview - The Street Youth Meeting was a highly useful way of gathering information from the youth. It was a first step to reach out to them as "key informants" to gather information on designing youth services.

Based on statements made by Task Force members and the youth themselves, the majority of the participants were users of the food and shelter services provided by some of the agencies represented at the meeting. In this respect, the participants represented those youth who were already "agency connected" and less representative of those who were not, or had only had occasional contact with these agencies. Care must be taken, therefore, not to confuse the needs expressed at this meeting with the needs of all street youth in the Hamilton area.

The meeting however, contributed towards and helped to clarify the general guidelines for conducting the second part of the methodology - the one-to-one conversations on the streets. There was a clearer idea of some of the youths' most pressing needs and how these might be met. The youth who attended the meeting appeared enthusiastic and full of ideas. The youths' comments were often vague and not clearly defined; consequently, one of the roles of the researchers in the planned one-to-one conversations was to better define the problems outlined by the youth and to further develop the solutions suggested by youth.

Perhaps the most important aspect of the meeting was its potential as a means to attract street youth and to encourage a framework for them to express their views and to respond to suggestions from the Task Force for improving community services for youth. Certainly, the participants themselves expressed a keen interest in more meetings in the future.

b) Conversations with Street Youth on the Streets

i) Context

The researchers concentrated upon three main areas reputed to be the focus of street youth gatherings: in the east end at Eastgate Mall, on the mountain, at Limeridge Mall and in the downtown core on King Street between James and Emerald Streets. They also visited the Barton and Wentworth area, the housing surveys in the East End at Delawana and Centennial Parkway, and also Gage Park. The largest concentration of street youth, however, was on the King Street strip; the other locations had no significant concentrations of street youth. According to retailers and youth at the malls, the numbers here increase in the winter, but in the summer the youth are primarily downtown. The conversations took place on street corners, in Gore Park, at coffee shops, arcades and "fast food joints". These conversations were informal, and the researchers did not press for personal information unless it was first volunteered.

In total the researchers spoke with approximately 30 youth. This was done sometimes on an individual basis and often in groups with two to four street youth. Many of the youth with whom they spoke were older (between 18 and 21 years of age). Except for their ages, however, they probably would not be characterized as transitional youth. The percentage of actual "transitional youth" was roughly 25% (and indeed a few of these were younger than the ages stipulated by the Task Force). In general, it was this group that was the most articulate in expressing their needs.

Most of the youth were white (approximately 90%); the remainder were natives. The researchers did not come into contact with any black, Chinese or Hispanic street youth. Most of the youth that were surveyed came from homes within the Hamilton area. Generally, those youth that identified themselves as coming from areas outside the region found themselves in Hamilton because their parents moved here before they left home.

The breakdown of males to females that the researchers encountered on the street was roughly three to one. Although they did speak with some females, they tended to be more reluctant to give information and less detailed in their comments. Consequently, significantly more information was gained from the male

street youth.

Boredom as a Catalyst - "Hanging out" on the street is boring, especially if you have no money to play the pinball machines. Boredom and alienation are especially acute if you do not have friends or acquaintances on the street. The researchers felt this boredom, frustration and alienation in the first three weeks of the actual field experience. Boredom is a part of street life, and youth often resort to seeking thrills to ease this boredom; youth engage in fights, wrestling, drugs, vandalism and sex to break the monotony and to distract themselves from the harsh realities of their lives.

Organization - Street youth band together in loosely knit groups of acquaintances with boyfriends and girlfriends being in the same group. Membership is fluid; couples and individuals come and go regularly. The group provides social support and protection, and individuals usually share whatever resources they might have. Although friction often occurs between members, the power of group solidarity and affiliation is always greater, and the youth tend to act together. A typical example of such a group is "P.J.'s group" (a false name used to protect her identity).

P.J. was the main character in this group, and although she was not the leader of the group (indeed the group had no leader), she was a central figure. The group was made up of seven members, 4 boys and 3 girls; each girl had a boyfriend belonging to the group. They were often seen lounging on the benches on the King Street Strip, hanging outside the video arcades and in Gore Park. They often hugged each other when greeting and showed affection for and group solidarity with each other. They shared everything: cigarettes, candy, food and gum. The average age was 17. The boys were usually older. It was rare to see individuals who belonged to this group on their own without the group being far behind. It was rarer still to see the girls walking alone.

The groups also offered protection from violence on the street especially with respect to the girls. As an example, one Thursday night the youth in P.J.'s gang allegedly attacked and stabbed a man who had allegedly raped P.J.; the boys who participated in the attack were very proud of their deed.

Only one of these youth had actually lived on street, and he did so infrequently. At the time we met them, they were all staying at an apartment they shared. We were never invited to their apartment, and

we never asked them how they paid the rent. Two of the boys did odd jobs but had difficulty in keeping them. The group also utilized the services of sympathetic relatives - usually older or more protective siblings - for resources such as O.H.I.P. services (using other people's ID), accommodation, money and food.

The researchers knew P.J.'s group for about three weeks; then suddenly they all disappeared. One day they saw P.J. and one other member of "the gang" downtown. She told the researchers that she had moved back to Burlington with her mother and that she had landed a job at a gym with her sister but was thinking of moving on to a better job. She was hoping to get her life in order. That was the last the researchers saw of "P.J. and the gang".

Most of the older youth the researchers spoke with were very protective in their relationships with the younger youth. They prided themselves on their street experience which they were ready to share with their younger more naive peers. They saw themselves as having "gone through that stage" of being on the street or being a newcomer to the street; they knew what the new youth on the block were going through, and they were willing to help them through it. Behind all of this willingness to help, however, relationships on the street appear superficial and impermanent as a general rule. Youth do not normally share their hurt and pain or communicate their insecurities; therefore, the help the older youth have to offer is largely in the area of meeting physical and social needs: friendship, cigarettes, accommodation, food, protection, etc. The older youth do not advise on getting a job, do counselling or satisfy other more deeply rooted needs. Nevertheless, the willingness of the older youth to help the younger ones is a noteworthy point regarding the planning of services. Another example is helpful here.

Andy and Jim (not their real names) are an example of a typical older/younger youth relationship. Andy was a 12 year old runaway who was new to this sort of lifestyle. He ran away only once before from a foster home. Andy was small boned, skinny, with oversized runners and liked acting "cool". Jim was a 19 year old hardened street youth. He was fairly well built and was the only youth on the block who "panhandled" for money. Jim was extroverted, gregarious and loved to boast about his past. The researchers strongly suspected that he exaggerated his exploits; he said he was a member of a Toronto "posse", that he was once a pimp, drove a BMW and had lived in a condo. He said when he was caught for drug dealing and sent to jail

he lost it all because "they were obtained illegally". It is believable, however, that he was involved in illegal activities and that he had "done time" in jail.

Andy idolized Jim and Jim prided himself on being Andy's guide and protector. He taught Andy how to "hustle" girls (i.e., making smart comments to girls when they passed by); he also taught him how to panhandle and shared his daily take with Andy to help him buy food if he lacked enough money. Jim connected Andy with acquaintances who had apartments where he could sleep for a night, and he showed excessive concern when he saw Andy in adult company - he apparently did not want a potential abusive situation to take place. Andy imitated Jim in all he did; he talked like Jim, they both "obtained" sunglasses at the same time and both were "cool".

Andy, however, did not last too long on the street. He was picked up by the police as a runaway and placed into a different foster home one out of town, near Barrie. The researchers heard through some of the other youth on the street that he was happy and going fishing often. Jim was eventually punched out by a "friend" who thought that he boasted too much. He was punched out again by the same guy the very next day. Later he disappeared from the block - "just vanished" said one youth.

The last that was heard, was that Jim was in jail in Oakville. Apparently he got caught doing a "B and E", but this rumour was never ratified. The researchers saw Andy, however, about two weeks after he disappeared; he was visiting Hamilton and hanging with some youth on the steps of Jackson Square. He had a new pair of sneakers, and he seemed to be in good shape. He confirmed the positive news about himself and had heard about Jim's circumstances; he seemed unaffected by the news.

Drug Use - Alcohol and drug use may have been missed since youth were not asked directly about substance use. Those abusing drugs/alcohol may not have been hanging out on the street where the majority of youth were contacted. They may not have highlighted substance use as a problem since they may perceive its use as one form of relief or reward on the street.

Accommodation - As P.J.'s group indicates, most youth find refuge in apartments with friends, often moving from apartment to apartment. Some of these youth have slept outside on park benches, abandoned cars, rooftops and abandoned buildings or apartments. The researchers visited one such apartment on Main Street East. The building was to be renovated, and apartments were being vacated. Five youth "squatted" in a ground floor apartment in that building.

All of them were under 16. The apartment was very dirty with refuse strewn all over. There were four plain mattresses on which they slept. Only two apartments were left occupied in the building, and it was clear that the youth's stay was a limited one.

The researchers met one youth who lived in an abandoned car, he referred to the car as "his". He often moved around late at night until early morning. He often slept in the library in Jackson Square during the day. Many youth also said they used the shelters as well.

Employment - Most of the youth we met were ill-prepared - psychologically, socially and educationally - for the work force. Many of them said they could not cope with the discipline of the work environment and said they lost jobs due to lateness, insubordination or lack of confidence in their abilities. One youth quit a job in construction after two days because he found the job too physically demanding. Young females tended to have an even harder time trying to land a job than did the males.

Researchers' Concerns

Although many of the youth were able to articulate their needs, they had difficulty in providing criticisms and suggestions as to how these needs could be met. As the age and experience of the youth increased, they seemed to become more articulate in voicing their opinions. Most of the information on suggestions for service delivery, therefore, came from older street youth.

It took about a month for the researchers to become casually acquainted and accepted by the street youth community and to establish rapport. The data collection phase was, therefore, shortened by almost one month. Such time constraints prevented us from establishing deeper roots in the community. A longer time period might have added more depth and data to the results.

ii) Needs Expressed by Street Youth

The Street Youth Public Meeting outlined several central needs expressed by the youth (notably shelter, money, employment, support and information needs).

These findings were further substantiated by the one-to-one work that was conducted with the youth on the street. Their responses were generally not surprising given the information that was already gleaned at the May meeting. "Non-agency connected" and "agency connected" youth were interviewed and generally the views of both groups were similar.

Some differences did exist, however, between the youth who were "on the street" and those "moving off the street" (referred to as transitional youth and typically over 20 years of age). The latter's comments seemed harsher and more punitive toward the youth on the street than did those of the former. Even those "youth" over the age of 20 years who, except for their age, might not qualify as transitional youth spoke less empathetically of street youth. "What they need is a good swift kick in the ass! That's what somebody should have done to me when I was that age," was one comment made by an angry 25 year old. Another spoke of using "concrete beds" at shelters to "motivate the youth into getting jobs and stuff". In short, it appeared that the transitional youth viewed the youth's situation as much more within their control, whereas the adolescents actually on the street tended to blame "the system".

Despite this difference, however, the perception of need was fairly consistent across the sample of youth. The researchers were struck by their clear acknowledgement of how to prioritize the various "needs" that they and their peers raised. There was very little discrepancy in this respect, and a fairly clear picture was drawn of what the youth felt should be "done first". The following is an outline of these expressed needs presented in order of importance.

Shelter - Clearly one of the most pressing concerns of the interviewed youth was that of shelter. Over and over, the youth stated the need for a "place to sleep" or a "place to crash". At first, it appeared that the youth preferred accommodations similar to emergency shelters such as the Good Shepherd Centre or Mission Services. Further probing however, revealed that many of the youth viewed shelters as unsafe and feared being "ripped off in the middle of the night". They recognized the need for a "safe house". By this they meant a place where they could go to sleep, could feel safe from the dangers of the

street, to "get clean", to "get some kind of credit to get on your feet" and/or one that could provide an address for welfare purposes. They specified that the place should be in good condition - "not a dump". In addition, the house should be staffed by people who have had experience on the street and "know what's going on". The description of this type of person varied considerably across the population of youth from street youth themselves, to ex-street youth, to "younger people", to people who may not be so young but "understand" and "care". Whatever the case, however, it appears that proper staffing of youth accommodations is a critical concern for the youth.

Although most of the youth cited emergency accommodation (as outlined above) as a necessity, the vast majority did not see it as ideal. More importantly they were concerned with more personal accommodation. "We want a place of our own," was a phrase often heard from various groups of the youth. One youth in particular was quite eloquent at making a case for this type of accommodation. Street youth are "used to being independent" and are highly reluctant to give this up. "It's a habit that you can't break". Accommodations that infringe too much on this independence are not viewed favourably by the youth. Many of the youth searching for apartments (usually to share with friends) and were not content with shelters. Even though many "enjoyed" street life and its social advantages (e.g., meeting up and "hanging" with friends), they often needed their own "space".

Those youth that were actively searching for apartments elaborated that there was a strong need for affordable housing for youth. Finding living quarters that were both "cheap and nice" was often difficult and a source of great frustration for these youth.

Money - Being "broke" is not uncommon for someone living on the street. Money and getting money is a "big thing", and for the youth that live on the street it is often taken illegally, through legitimate employment or through general welfare assistance. The youth are well aware of the welfare system and for the most part how it might operate to serve them. Primarily, however, they are aware of its pitfalls (e.g., the need for first and last months rent to secure an address in order to then receive a welfare cheque, the difficulty of getting

emergency assistance, etc.).

Welfare reform was suggested by a wide number of youth - particularly those 18 years of age and older. The main concern is that welfare in Hamilton does not provide funds for first and last month's rent. "It's a rip off in Hamilton. They do it in Toronto. Why the hell can't they do it here?!" Most of the youth were quick to point out this fundamental difference. But although they spoke quite highly of the situation in Toronto, they were quick to point out the potential for "freeloaders" to "rip off" this type of system.

Their primary concern, however, was not "ripping off" the system; it was the dilemma of needing an address to get welfare and needing welfare to get an address. "What you could do," said one youth, "is make cheques out directly to the landlord so people aren't ripping off welfare". Others came up with the same idea to protect themselves from spending the money frivolously.

Employment - "Youth would work" if they could find suitable jobs for a suitable wage. What a suitable wage is, however, varies according to the age of the youth with whom you spoke. Younger youth (15 to 17 years of age) often stipulate a "minimum of \$5.00 per hour". Older youth (over the age of 18 years) generally wanted "at least \$7.00 - \$8.00 per hour". Still there are some that expect a job that earns twenty-five to thirty thousand dollars per year. All agreed, however, that minimum wage and especially minimum wage for youth under 18 years was a "total rip off".

One suggestion that was made repeatedly in the conversations with the youth was that of job/career training specifically for "apprenticeship-type jobs" like carpentry, heating and cooling, electrical and mechanical repairs. The youth did not appear to want jobs merely for short term money. For them, employment is an investment, and they want a guarantee that this will "pay big" over the long run. Even some of the youth in conflict with the law, etc. with whom the researchers spoke agreed that job training is a big priority.

Surprisingly, however, the youth did not speak well of the provincial government's Futures Programme. "All it does is rip off youth. It uses us for

cheap labour". Some youth spoke quite passionately about this - having been "burned" by Futures in the past. The wages are "too low" and "there is no guarantee of a job once your term is up". "The government should find you a job and make them keep you so long as you're doing the work okay," was one youth's comment. Most of the youth had similar reactions.

Health Care - Most of the youth on the street do not feel that they can go to emergency if they need medical attention. Most do not know their parents' O.H.I.P. number or have one themselves. This in itself prevents them from going to the hospital.* They also "ask too many questions". The extensive amount of information required by the hospitals often scares youth - particularly those that are running from a bad home situation. It was suggested that a "no questions asked" service be developed like a "drop-in for first-aid" for those youth that need medical attention but don't want to go to the hospital.

A few of the youth also suggested free abortion services and allowances for birth control. Those youth that had spent time in Toronto were more likely to suggest offering free contraception and clean needles than those who stayed in Hamilton. These suggestions were made less frequently than suggestions for welfare reform, affordable housing and job training.

Food - Most of the youth did not think getting food was terribly difficult. They were well aware of the free meals offered at the Good Shepherd, Wesley Centre and the Mission. Stealing was also a likely possibility. Some suggested "care packages" and were surprised to hear that St. Matthew's House offered such services. The need for "late night" food was also suggested.

Clothing - Although the need for clothing was said not to be a "big priority", some youth recognized that it might be needed by some youth (especially the younger ones) who have been kicked out of their homes. Such clothes should be "fairly decent"; youth don't want to wear "yo-yo pants" (i.e., clothing usually dating from some time in the mid-seventies). The clothes that services make

* It is interesting to note that all the hospitals surveyed for the Accessible Services to Youth section said they were likely to absorb the costs for medical care of someone without insurance who could not be properly billed because he/she did not have a permanent address.

available should be "fairly modern" so that the youth that need them don't get "hassled" by others on the street.

Common Themes

It is well worth noting two additional yet extremely important needs expressed - albeit often indirectly - by the youth. Support and information were "common themes" that ran throughout the conversations with youth. Of all the services listed, the need for caring and supportive staff is critical. Despite the fact that these needs were presented as highly important by the youth, they were often not volunteered initially. Probing usually prompted these responses. Nonetheless, they remain high on the youth's list of priorities.

The youth defined support as "youth need someone who can sympathize-someone who's been there". They seem to want a willing ear and shoulder. By this, however, they do not mean that youth on the street need counselling. All they want is "someone to listen - not counsel - just listen". Perhaps one 16 year old put it best: "You don't need some 35 year old counsellor who is just interested in putting you in a home. You need someone probably just a little older than yourself who knows what's happening and can tell you what's good, bad, right or wrong".

Although age was often raised by the youth as a factor that might indicate that someone may be more likely to "understand" street youth and their situation, this cannot be noted unequivocally. Often they would simply refer to "someone who cares". Indeed, their favourable response to one researcher (age 32 years) and his concern for their situation was indicative of the fact that age may not necessarily be a crucial factor in determining suitable people to play support roles in the service system. Whatever the case, caring individuals who understand street life and are willing to provide support for street youth on their own terms appears to be the key issue in the staffing of any service for these youth.

Information needs was the second theme. Surprisingly the youth on the streets of Hamilton are not well aware of the services available to them. They

are primarily aware of Wesley Centre, the Good Shepherd and Welfare. Beyond these, however, their knowledge is limited. Agencies should not assume that the youth are aware of the services they offer. "Maybe they could put up bulletins on telephone poles and in Gore Park to let us know", said one youth who was amazed to learn that Hamilton had facilities where people could access free meals or groceries.

It appears that the transitional youth have a larger perspective of the services available to them. They mentioned services such as Adolescent Community Care Program and the Youth Employment Centre. The younger youth, however, do not generally know about these services. When informed about them, they were often surprised and then somewhat sceptical. They recommended that services make themselves better known to street youth by advertising downtown in the areas in which they usually "hang".

c) Life Histories

Life histories are important to qualitative research because they further substantiate and add context to categorized data. Two life histories (Freddie and Buster) are presented here. In these life histories key indicators from the literature and agency collected data are made real. These include family conflict, substance abuse and prostitution.

Freddie (not his real name) was born in Toronto and lived with his natural parents for about four years. After that he lived in a foster home for 2 years until he was finally adopted by a family at age 6.

Freddie lived with this family for a period of 6 years. He claimed that there were always "problems" and that he was often singled out as the "scapegoat". The family had 3 other children "of their own".

At the age of 9, Freddie attempted to commit suicide by swallowing pills. He was put into foster care for 3 months.

When Freddie returned to his adoptive family, his conflicts with his parents escalated. He was spending increased time at video arcades and his family did not approve. Although Freddie said he knew this, he chose to pursue his interest regardless. After many incidents and numerous arguments, his adoptive mother "caught him by the ear" and basically told the father "it's him or me". At the age of 12 years, Freddie was moved to a foster home.

Freddie had difficulty at this foster home because they offered little freedom and Freddie had no opportunity to earn money. This situation finally broke down when Freddie was caught stealing. A similar situation arose at his second foster home. Although these people allowed Freddie to go to video arcades, Freddie found that he did not have enough money for the arcades and was again caught stealing. Today, Freddie blames this downfall on his "addiction to video games".

From here Freddie went to a group home. He said he was often bullied and beat up by the older youth there and became a "runner" for the first three months because he "couldn't handle it".

He finally settled into school and was doing well at the group home until he "pulled the stupidest stunt he had ever done in his life". Basically, he "scammed" a blind man for \$19.00 when he asked him to change a \$20.00 at an arcade. Freddie was with a friend at the time and his friend "ratted". When the group home found out about this, Freddie felt that he was "dropped to the lowest level". At this point, he just said "fuck it". He said he became "super mouthy" and began to runaway frequently.

It was at this time that Freddie came to Hamilton. He was on the streets off and on for most of the summer. He began stealing in order to meet his needs on the street and was eventually arrested for shoplifting. To relieve boredom, he and some other youth "smashed a forklift". They were charged with vandalism. Freddie was beginning to know what it meant to be in trouble with the law.

Freddie went back to the group home after the end of the summer. He describes his behaviour as "doing good for a little bit, then fucking up, then doing good, etc.". Eventually Freddie went back to one of his previous foster homes with an agreement that the group home would hold his bed in case things did not work out at the foster home. When problems developed and Freddie wanted to go back to the group home, however, administrative changes at CAS prevented him from doing so. Freddie still maintains that had he been able to go to the group home at that time, his situation would not have become so bleak.

Further problems at his foster home caused Freddie to run again. This time he learned that if he wanted to survive he had to "lower some moral standards". Freddie met a man who took him into his home. At first, he was extremely hospitable. After a short time, however, he told Freddie that if he was going to stay he would have to perform certain sexual favours.

Freddie said he objected to performing sex with the man but agreed to prostituting himself for money. This man introduced Freddie to Jackson Street and taught him how to "hustle" men. In return Freddie was to give him half his money. Freddie learned quickly how to "scum" the man and rarely gave him as much as 1/2 his "take". At the time, he was 15 years old.

Eventually Freddie said he was kicked out of the man's place because he refused him sex and was "too mouthy". He slept on the streets, on the ledge of Kresgies, etc. and was eventually picked up by the police. He was sent to a group home in another city this time, but moved out just after his sixteenth birthday.

He came to Hamilton again ("because it's not too big and Toronto's too scary"). He said he was in and out of various apartments because of noise problems or because he himself didn't like the conditions. He was receiving money from CAS (because he was a Crown Ward) but found that the money would only last for about one third of the month. After that, he would head to Jackson Street to make more money. "Basically", says Freddie, "I was living the street life even though I had a place to go".

One Christmas day at about 2:00 a.m., Freddie was walking by himself. A man stopped and asked if he wanted a ride. Freddie got in the car and the man subsequently pulled a knife and raped him. A week later, Freddie went to the police. "They shook me off", he says. As soon as they recognized him from Jackson Street, they gave his story no credibility. He was held in custody as a runaway and sent to Webber House. Nothing happened to the man in the car.

At Webber House, Freddie "didn't give a shit" and was "kicked out" shortly thereafter. Once on the streets, Freddie found that CAS was "taking their sweet dick ass time" getting his money to him so he had to find other ways to "keep himself alive".

Freddie stayed with a friend who was gay. Freddie was given free room and board and occasionally he would perform sexual favours for his friend (but always for a fee). Eventually, this situation dissolved. Again, Freddie moved from place to place.

Freddie said he tried his hand at legitimate forms of employment - most of which he despised. While working at a fast food place, his court date came up (he was facing one charge of prostitution, two charges of failing to appear and three of theft). He was sent to jail for thirty days and is now certain he will never go back.

When Freddie was finally released he said he had difficulty finding suitable accommodation and employment. Nonetheless, he managed to save some money and was eventually able to pay all of his fines.

Currently he is 19 years old and is living on General Welfare Assistance; his probation period is almost finished and he is staying at a local men's shelter. Although he admits that he has been "living the streets" for the past few months, he wants nothing more than to be free of this lifestyle. He has been accepted as a mature student at Mohawk College.

Buster (not his real name) is 21 years old. He is unemployed. He does not have a place to stay and was waiting to see if a space was available for him to crash at the Salvation Army when we spoke.

Buster left home in 1986. He cited drug use and too many rules as the reasons for leaving. His dad kicked him out because he caught him with drugs. He was on the streets for 3 to 4 months; then he went back home again because he "got tired" of street life.

The next time he left home was after a serious physical fight with his father which resulted in his father's hospitalization for 3 months. While away from home he broke into his parents' home numerous times to steal money and food. He was "about 17" at that time.

At 19 years of age he went to jail - 6 months after leaving home for the third time. He was found guilty for breaking and entering, drug possession and theft under \$1,000. Buster had been living on his own since his release from jail until 1988. He had a few jobs but quit many because he "didn't get paid enough". He returned home in April 1988; soon after, his sister and he threw a big drug party, and his dad kicked him out again.

Buster is still doing "B and E's" especially into his parents' home. He is currently staying at the Salvation Army hostel, shuttling between that and the Good Shepherd Centre; as soon as his time is up at one he moves to the other. He is "banned for life" at Mission Services because of a fight with one of the residents and one staff person. He is hoping to get a place soon and plans to pay the rent with help from welfare. At the present time, he is planning a major heist - to break into his parents' home again, and steal everything with the use of a truck. He is already soliciting help and seeking prospective buyers for the V.C.R., T.V. and stereo system that he expects to grab.

d) Parents of Street Youth

On June 26, 1989, a public meeting was organized for parents of street youth. It was advertised through the local newspapers and radios. Some information flyers were also posted in grocery stores. Unfortunately no parents attended this evening meeting.

Task Force members believed that parent input was essential to the research process. Consequently, the Needs Assessment Advisory Committee and the S.P.R.C. researchers planned an alternate activity to get parent input. The CHML Radio talk show with John Hardy resulted in about 13 phone calls during the day of August 16, 1989. Only five of these calls contained information central to the

Task Force's purpose. However, this fulfilled one of the initial targets of the Task Force - to interview 5 parents. The information from these 5 phone calls is presented here as described to the researchers.

Respondent 1: Aunt (30 minute conversation)

My 17 year old niece has no sense of responsibility, lies, has no respect for others and has been caught stealing from home. She has had behavioural problems since about age 14 years and is becoming "more serious". Since kindergarten, she has always been poor in school. She has been "passed through" the system and therefore can't keep up in school because of missed material from the previous year. She skips high school regularly and was "kicked out" several times although she was readmitted after conferences with parents/principal but continued to skip. She got a job but didn't show up after a few days and was fired. She was asked recently to leave home by her parents because of her behaviour. She was on her own for about 6 months and got into prostitution. She seems to "thrive on excitement" and "living on the edge". Her parents don't know what to do. They consulted a family doctor who suggested counselling. Private counsellor said only that "she needs lots of love". The parents tried looking into homes in Brantford/London to get her away from home, bad influences and to get her help but the homes were all full. The mother feels guilty that she has done something wrong. She wonders about her daughter's safety and where she is.

The Aunt suggested "self-help groups for parents" to help them cope.

Respondent 2: Mother (60 minute conversation)

This mother has had problems with a daughter since age 13 (now 23). The daughter is adopted (same as brother). At about the age of 14, the daughter started wondering about her natural family (apparently the mother tried to be helpful by getting information through CAS but this was very difficult). The daughter's behaviour became problematic. She ran away at age 13, she hated school, she would go out all night with friends, the mother would call the police, and the police would bring her home drunk. She quit school at age 15. After age 16, police would no longer pick her up. They tried counselling at CAS but there was no progress. The mother was having trouble dealing with her daughter's behaviour and admitted herself to hospital for psychiatric observation. The school recommended foster care for daughter. CAS concurred and recommended permanent foster care. The mother agreed to one month only because she felt she needed a break and couldn't deal with her behaviour. The daughter called daily wanting to come home. Her behaviour was worse once she was home again. The mother tried talking to her doctor, the police, a pastor and no one seemed to know how to help.

The daughter has tried to commit suicide several times on and off since she was 17 years old. She now has problems with alcohol, is in an abusive relationship with a boyfriend and becomes violent herself frequently (especially when she's drunk). The mother is very concerned and said she will "always be there" for her daughter.

The mother suggested a parent support group; she is very interested in starting one if possible because she "has seen what can happen"

Respondent 3: Mother (35 minute conversation)

This mother has a 13 year old daughter who had run away on four separate occasions. The mother indicates that in this fourth instance, she has since been away for 2 weeks now. The daughter had been sexually molested at age 7 by a 16 year old boy who was a trusted friend of the family. She kept the secret of the abuse for 5 years, only revealing it to her mother last year, because she was warned by the abuser that her stepfather would reject her because he already had her mother's love. He also threatened to kill her if she talked. The mother believes that the assault is the major contributing factor to subsequent behavioural problems: she does not want to take orders from anyone, she is aggressive, violent and uncooperative. She has been arrested for shoplifting by the police at the age of 9, and has been suspended from school for "groping" (i.e., grabbing boys from behind by their testicles).

On one occasion she stayed at a friend's house, whose mother did not spend much time at home. The friend and her older sister were involved in prostitution. On another occasion, an older widow phoned the mother to say that the daughter was fine and staying with her. The widow offered to act as a foster parent for her. Not soon after, however, she evicted the daughter because she could not abide by the rules. Whenever the daughter ran, she would hang out downtown and in the malls.

The mother contacted Child and Adolescent Services for counselling help which referred her to the CAS, after 3 months. CAS contacted her and arranged for counselling, she wanted CAS to provide counselling in a group home setting, but the CAS worker emphasized that the child's consent was important, which if not forthcoming, the mother would have to obtain a court order for the child to be put in care. She said that the worker told her that in going to court she would have to abdicate all parental rights such as losing all visiting rights if she wanted to put her daughter into long term care; furthermore, the worker stated that the daughter could learn delinquent behaviour from other youth in a group home like prostitution, etc..

After 4 months in which the daughter got only 10 weeks of counselling, they were once more referred back to Child and Adolescent Services. Child and Adolescent Services expressed reluctance to handle the case,

stating that the risk was not high enough and other "worse" youth had priority. She eventually received counselling due to the intervention of an irate school counsellor. The mother also contacted Parental Stress Services, she was turned off because no one was in at the moment and the receptionist asked for her name and number even though the service advertised itself as Parents Anonymous.

The mother suggested that agencies that are designed to deal with these problems (e.g., CAS, Child and Adolescent Services and the Police) should give more support to parents.

Respondent 4: Mother (40 minute conversation)

This mother has a 15 year old daughter who has been running off and on for a year now. She also, has a 13 year old son exhibiting similar behaviour. The daughter is into drugs and was very truant but the parents were never notified of the evolving problem; extra assistance through the school was sought but "teachers seemed to expect the daughter to make the first move", saying "she has to want this". There was a major lack of communication between school and home; child was put on a chair in front of the principal's office for a number of days but parents were not notified. After the parents found out there were many parent-teacher meetings. Psychological testing indicated no major problems.

The family contacted Chedoke Family Centre and Child and Adolescent Services and got into family therapy at Chedoke but the daughter decided not to go. "Now all we do is talk about the problem; we don't even have the opportunity to plan for the future or to pick up the pieces".

We sent her to CAS's Life Coping Skills to learn to live independently. CAS refused the son though because it is based on voluntary placement. "We feel so guilty and so alone, like we're the only ones in the world with this problem."

This mother suggested there needs to be a self help group where parents can learn from each other about how to cope and not feel so alone. There is a need for more honest communication between home and school; parents should know immediately about a child's misbehaviour. There is a need for more information for supports available for parents; neither the school nor child welfare agency ever suggested the parents contact Community Information Service or Parental Stress Services. There should be an agency available to intervene in a crisis and help negotiate a "healthy" outcome; "many times I don't know what to do". Agencies should be available in the evenings when crisis occur. Agency staff seem to have too heavy schedules and sometimes referrals are placed on 2 month waiting lists. Youth need peer support from other youth who have lived through the same experience. "Youth should also be taught" relationship skills in the schools (e.g., conflict resolution with parents).

Respondent 5: Mother (20 minute conversation)

This mother has a 17 year old son who was "kicked-out" of alternate education programs at school. He now lives on the streets and with friends and has just recently been charged. He threatens to kill his parents. The mother has packed all his belongings and put them near the front door. But she doesn't know if kicking him out is the right decision. The mother discussed it with the family doctor but the doctor suggested family counselling but the son won't participate. "I feel so alone and have no ideas on how to make this situation any better".

She suggested that a group for parents be formed to help each other learn to deal effectively with children's behaviour. The school is a key player here because the school would know about other parents with similar difficulties and the least they could do is make parents aware of parent support groups.

The following section outlines an additional story and feelings of another parent. This parent is a member of the Community Street Youth Task Force and has been very helpful to the Task Force and its activities.

Task Force Parent Representative: Father (30 minute conversation)

As a parent, the child welfare and child justice systems can be very confusing. I have been in and out of court with my own youth (now ages 15 and 17) for the past 5 years. Despite this I am still unsure of what the Young Offenders Act is all about and how it is implemented through the courts. Although I have been present for my children's hearings, etc., I have received no assistance from the courts or children's service agencies to understand the proceedings and the discussions handed down by the judge.

It seems incredible to me that a judge can rule that a 13 year old girl who is involved in prostitution and pornography is not a danger to herself. Yet this is exactly what happened with my daughter. As a parent, I was powerless to do anything. I felt stripped of my right to protect my daughter from herself and from the streets. I had nowhere to turn for guidance. No one - least of all the social service agencies with which I had been involved - offered help.

Similarly, the child welfare system is overwhelming to many parents. Although CAS tries to work with the youth and parents together, it often falls short. The mass of confusion, anger and frustration that parents feel when dealing with CAS and similar agencies is often too much for them to bear. A parent's right to protect his/her child from the dangers of the street - and from the government and social services if need be - seems non-existent. Governments seem to strip parents of this right. Unfortunately, governments do not make good parents.

My own son was made a Ward of the Crown by consent because my wife and I were unable to deal with his behaviour. We felt he needed help. When my son went to court and told the judge that he wanted to live with his aunt, I contested. I had good reason to believe that this would not be a good home environment for him. Unfortunately, the judge gave me little credibility and ended the wardship in one sweep of his hand. My son was now living in a bad home environment. Governments definitely do not make good parents!

Social services fail at being parents when they put youth in group homes. Both my youth have been in Webber House (at different times) and I have problems with the way they operate. The youth have their needs met with respect to food and shelter, but there is little done in terms of life skills training. The youth don't appear to answer to anyone and ultimately they end up on the streets again. The group homes don't appear to be doing a very good job, yet they refuse to involve the parents.

Of course there is sometimes a need for governments to intervene in the family to protect the child. But in families such as my own, where no abuse or neglect was taking place, the invasion is resented. We parents feel that we have no rights and that our opinions are ignored. Social services should work to involve parents more in the work they do with their children. This might involve parent awareness and information programs (e.g., re: laws), advocacy for parents trying to protect their children or assistance in dealing with behavioural problems. The parents should not be left out because when social services like CAS pull out when the child turns 16 years of age, it is the parent who is left to deal with the child. And for someone without proper knowledge of the laws and the system, this can be very frustrating.

Data and information collection about parents of street youth by the Task Force was never intended to be a comprehensive exercise. The above 6 respondents provide qualitative insight into parental issues but further exploration into how many parents may have similar stories and similar needs should be carried out.

6.0 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations that follow here are important for making the current system of services more responsive to the needs of youth. The Task Force's role between October 1988 and January 1990 has been a review role. From this review, the Task Force has identified key components of service needs which are expressed as recommendations.

6.1 Overview

Although no agencies have street youth specifically as their mandate, several have a special focus on street youth within their broader organization. At present there are not enough resources put into the system to provide an accessible, flexible and immediate response to street youth needs. Therefore the Street Youth Task Force recommends:

1. THAT ADDITIONAL FUNDING BE PROVIDED TO ENHANCE SERVICES FOR STREET YOUTH AND TO IMPLEMENT THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THIS REPORT AND THAT EVERY EFFORT BE MADE TO GET AND KEEP THESE YOUTH OFF THE STREET.

The second recommendation involves the formation of a community-based team to plan for the development and implementation of these recommendations. Therefore the Street Youth Task Force recommends:

- 2.A) THAT A.A.T.D. AND THE REGION ESTABLISH A COMMUNITY-BASED TEAM TO PLAN. REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE TASK FORCE SHOULD BE INCLUDED ON THIS TEAM;
- B) THAT A COMMUNITY-BASED TEAM TAKE THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THIS REPORT AND DIRECT THEM TO THE APPROPRIATE FUNDERS AND POLICY MAKERS;
- C) THAT THE TEAM BE RESPONSIBLE FOR DEVELOPING A PROCESS TO ASSIST THE COMMUNITY IN IMPLEMENTING THIS REPORT.

The absence of consistent, standardized data collection makes it difficult to obtain accurate statistics. The issues of confidentiality and legislation inhibits the freedom of agencies to release statistics. Therefore the Street Youth Task Force recommends:

3. THAT AT AN INTERMINISTERIAL LEVEL A STANDARDIZED METHOD OF COLLECTING AND RELEASING DATA ON STREET YOUTH NEEDS TO BE DEVELOPED.

6.2 Guiding Principles

Street youth are a transient population. Their circumstances often require immediate access to multiple services due to situational and motivational elements; many circumstances are crisis oriented. If a youth is not serviced quickly, problems are often exacerbated. Immediately accessible services foster the building of trust needed to enable movement back into the mainstream and off of the streets. Therefore the Street Youth Task Force recommends:

- 4.A) THAT STREET YOUTH SERVICES BE IMMEDIATELY AVAILABLE AND CLUSTERED IN ONE LOCATION E.G., ONE-STOP SHOPPING;
- B) THAT THE SERVICES BE AVAILABLE ON A 24 HOUR BASIS;
- C) THAT THE BROADER COMMUNITY WORK COOPERATIVELY TO CREATE A CONTINUUM OF SERVICES TO INCLUDE CRISIS SUPPORT SERVICES.

It was noted that many agencies/services have long waiting lists which are a deterrent to youth. In order to respond with more immediacy, the Street Youth Task Force recommends:

- 5. THAT COMMUNITY AGENCIES/SERVICES REVIEW HOW THEY RESPOND, AND IMPLEMENT WAYS OF RESPONDING MORE QUICKLY TO THE NEEDS OF STREET YOUTH. THIS MAY MEAN CHANGES TO EXISTING SERVICES OR THE CREATION OF A NEW SERVICE.

Youth must be seen as a priority. Services need to identify the needs of youth and plan programs appropriately. The level of maturity, emotional and safety needs of street youth are often such that they could be better provided for, apart from adults. In addition, the changing complexion requires the ability to be flexible and able to change. Therefore the Street Youth Task Force recommends:

- 6.A) THAT EXISTING ORGANIZATIONS WHO PRESENTLY SERVE STREET YOUTH BE RESOURCED TO ENABLE THE SEPARATION OF ADULT AND YOUTH SERVICES;
- B) THAT SERVICES BE MANDATED TO DEAL SPECIFICALLY WITH STREET YOUTH;
- C) THAT CONSIDERATION BE GIVEN TO THE MIX AND LOCATION OF SERVICES THAT SHOULD BE PROVIDED IN A DROP-IN.

People working with street youth have to have a broad understanding of the range of problems affecting youth including prostitution, sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse and substance abuse. There has been much consideration given to the need for street workers. Workers need to be accessible (be where street youth are), be able to build trust by responding immediately, and have the back-up of more formal services. There is a strong recognition that workers should not be office bound. Therefore the Street Youth Task Force recommends:

- 7.A) THAT ALL STREET YOUTH WORKERS BE REQUIRED TO HAVE A BROAD UNDERSTANDING AS WELL AS A RANGE OF SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE TO WORK WITH STREET YOUTH;
- B) THAT THOSE PROVIDING SERVICES TO STREET YOUTH BE PREPARED TO SPEND TIME ON THE STREET, WITH THE STREET YOUTH.

Hamilton-Wentworth is a multi-cultural centre and it is necessary for us to address the needs of street youth, with sensitivity. Therefore the Street Youth Task Force recommends:

- 8. THAT IT WILL BE NECESSARY FOR US TO PROVIDE SERVICES TO ALL STREET YOUTH WITH SENSITIVITY TO THEIR RACE, COLOUR, CREED, SEXUAL ORIENTATION. SERVICES NEED TO BE NON-JUDGEMENTAL, WITH THE ABILITY TO BE RESPONSIVE TO EACH INDIVIDUAL'S NEEDS.

6.3 Daily Needs

The following outlines the areas of street youth's daily needs which need to be addressed.

a) Food

The Street Youth Task Force recommends:

- 9. THAT PREPARED MEALS AND GROCERIES BE MORE READILY ACCESSIBLE, FREE OR AT LOW COST FOR STREET YOUTH.

b) Accommodation

Street youth and others identified the need for a transition house for youth only, which would provide safe, accessible, affordable shelter and personal accommodation. This resource would be of a longer duration than a hostel with flexibility for length of stay and structure. Youth who are currently on or who have decided to exit the street need help to stabilize and acquire skills necessary for day to day survival. Staff need to be caring, skilled, experienced resource persons who focus on developing supportive and trusting relationships. Therefore the Street Youth Task Force recommends:

10. THAT A TRANSITION HOUSE WITH FLEXIBILITY FOR LENGTH OF STAY AND STRUCTURE BE ESTABLISHED. SUPPORT SERVICES ARE NEEDED TO ASSIST IN MOVING TO LONG TERM ACCOMMODATION.

There is a critical need for single, independent, affordable long term housing in Hamilton-Wentworth for this young population. Therefore the Street Youth Task Force recommends:

11. THAT A VARIETY OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING ALTERNATIVES BE DEVELOPED.

c) Financial

There is an assumption underlying the welfare system that youth under 18 years should live at home. A majority of street youth are fleeing an abusive situation. Parents who are abusing a youth, such as a father sexually assaulting a daughter, would agree to take her back. Therefore she becomes ineligible for General Welfare Assistance (G.W.A.) and is forced either back to an abusive situation or to the streets. G.W.A. should be more accessible for street youth. Therefore the Street Youth Task Force recommends:

- 12.A) THAT REGIONAL SOCIAL SERVICES GIVE GREATER WEIGHT TO THE STATEMENTS MADE BY THE STREET YOUTH AND ASSESSMENTS MADE BY AGENCIES AS TO THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE YOUTH;
- B) THAT THE DISCRETIONARY SECTIONS OF THE GENERAL WELFARE ACT BE INTERPRETED MORE CONSISTENTLY AND OPENLY.

We would like to see street youth help themselves. The present General Welfare Assistance legislation is inhibiting. Therefore the Street Youth Task Force recommends:

- 13.A) THAT THE ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA UNDER THE G.W.A. BE EXPANDED TO INCLUDE FIRST AND LAST MONTH'S RENT WITHOUT RECOVERY (PAYBACK), WITH THE LIMITATION OF ONCE A YEAR;
- B) THAT THERE NEEDS TO BE MORE FLEXIBILITY FOR THE 16 AND 17 YEAR OLD POPULATION TO ADDRESS THEIR NEEDS, WITHOUT PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT;
- C) THAT PARENTS OF 16 AND 17 YEAR OLDS SHOULD BE CONTACTED ONLY WHEN STREET YOUTH INFORMATION, WITH RESPECT TO THEIR NEGATIVE HOME ENVIRONMENT, CANNOT BE SUBSTANTIATED.

d) Health Care

It is essential that street youth have equal access to health services. They want to be healthy and, with support, benefit from health care. Enabling these youth to exercise control over their lives by participating in decisions about their health care is an important goal. Traditional service delivery does not meet street youth needs. In addition to health care, assistance is also needed to obtain OHIP coverage, both in filling out forms and in having a location to pick up the returned cards.

Street youth need "store front" health services. Often they do not have access to a family physician, will not use emergency or outpatient services and do not have an OHIP number. Health care should be interpreted in a broad sense inclusive of physical and emotional health and general well being. Therefore the Street Youth Task Force recommends:

- 14.A) THAT COMPREHENSIVE "HASSLE FREE" HEALTH SERVICES BE MADE AVAILABLE TO ENSURE STREET YOUTH ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE;
- B) THAT PROGRAMS BE DEVELOPED AND FUNDED TO ESTABLISH "STORE FRONT" AND/OR MOBILE HEALTH SERVICES.

e) Personal Hygiene

Street youth access to facilities for laundry and personal hygiene is limited. Therefore the Street Youth Task Force recommends:

15. THAT SERVICES FOR STREET YOUTH INCLUDE SHOWERS AND LAUNDRY FACILITIES TO ADDRESS THEIR PERSONAL HYGIENE NEEDS.

f) Recreation

16. THAT RECREATIONAL ASPECTS OF STREET YOUTH LIVES BE INCLUDED IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SERVICES.

g) Employment/Education/Apprenticeship

Employment provides the essentials for healthy living. Street youth have no where to live, and frequently have unresolved abusive backgrounds, both family and institutional. Lacking stability and a legal income, they are victimized on the streets. These youth need to stabilize their lives before they can begin to benefit from job training or educational programs. Therefore the Street Youth Task Force recommends:

- 17.A) THAT EMPLOYMENT/EDUCATIONAL INITIATIVES FOR STREET YOUTH ENSURE THAT ALL THESE NEEDS ARE ADEQUATELY MET.

Accessing appropriate employment opportunities is a difficult process for many street youth. There are some programs and services currently in place which could be of assistance. It is evident from our research that in many cases these youth are aware of the variety of options available to them but choose not to make use of them. Therefore the Street Youth Task Force recommends:

- 17.B) THAT YOUTH LIVING ON THE STREET BE INFORMED AS TO THE EMPLOYMENT SERVICES AND AGENCIES AVAILABLE TO THEM. THIS MAY TAKE THE FORM OF MORE AGGRESSIVE OUTREACH BY THE VARIOUS EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES INVOLVED AS WELL AS BETTER COMMUNICATION BETWEEN AGENCIES CURRENTLY SERVING YOUTH ON THE STREET AND APPROPRIATE EMPLOYMENT SERVICES.

It is also evident that employment agencies are often unable to respond to the immediacy of the street youth's need vis-a-vis employment. The agencies tend to offer an employment counselling program which many of these youth are not stable enough to participate in. Therefore the Street Youth Task Force recommends:

17.C) THAT AGENCIES CURRENTLY OFFERING SERVICES TO STREET YOUTH INVESTIGATE THE FEASIBILITY OF DESIGNING PROGRAMS TO MEET THESE MORE IMMEDIATE EMPLOYMENT NEEDS. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A LIST OF TEMPORARY AND OCCASIONAL JOBS WOULD BE ONE EXAMPLE OF THIS.

For many youth attempting to make the transition from life on the streets to life off the streets, access to employment training programs is essential. A common complaint with the programs currently available is that they do not result in full-time employment and do not offer an adequate source of income. Therefore the Street Youth Task Force recommends:

17.D) THAT TRAINING INITIATIVES BE ENHANCED SO AS TO HELP YOUTH ACCESS FULL-TIME EMPLOYMENT AT THE END OF THE PROGRAM AS WELL AS PROVIDE A REASONABLE WAGE WHILE PARTICIPATING IN IT.

Street youth have special educational needs. Therefore the Street Youth Task Force recommends:

18. THAT SECTION 25 CLASSROOMS IN STORE FRONT PROGRAMS, OR OTHER APPROPRIATE SCHOOL ALTERNATIVES BE INCREASED.

Programs involving apprenticeships, with long term support are identified as needed. Youth require job preparatory skills, as well as life and social skills. Street youth are not as likely as other youth to be considered appropriate for apprenticeship programs from Federal or Provincial offices. Therefore the Street Youth Task Force recommends:

19. THAT APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS BE DEVELOPED TO ACCOMMODATE THE SKILL DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYMENT NEEDS OF STREET YOUTH.

h) Poverty and Economic Hardship

Stress on families is increased with economic hardship. In addition, limited and inadequate resources are factors which increase the numbers of street youth. Families need adequate income and affordable housing. The incidence of low income families in Hamilton-Wentworth increased from 13.1% to 14.4% in 1986 (S.P.R.C., 1989). Agencies, government and our community needs to take action for people living in poverty as they include our children. Child

mortality rates are twice as high among low income families as among high income families (ibid). Therefore the Street Youth Task Force recommends:

20. THAT OUR COMMUNITY ADVOCATE FOR THE PROVISION OF BASIC NEEDS SUCH AS ADEQUATE INCOME AND HOUSING FOR INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES.

6.4 Crisis Intervention

Coordinated service provision, which has continuity, is essential for youth and their families. Enhancement of counselling, assessment, and treatment services are needed. Sensitivity is needed for youth with special and ethnocultural needs.

Long waiting lists are deterrents and barriers for youth. Workers are needed to go to the youth on the street. Therefore the Street Youth Task Force recommends:

- 21.A) THAT TIMELY, COORDINATED SERVICE PROVISION BE STRENGTHENED FOR CRISIS ASSESSMENT AND TREATMENT, ESPECIALLY FOR THOSE AT RISK, USING A MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAM APPROACH;
- B) THAT THESE SERVICES BE EXTENDED TO REACH YOUTH ON THE STREET.
- C) GAPS IN CRISIS RESPONSE (E.G., SUICIDE, FAMILY VIOLENCE, SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND SEXUAL ABUSE) AND FOLLOW-UP SERVICES BE ADDRESSED TO MEET THE NEEDS OF YOUTH AND THEIR FAMILIES IN CRISIS.

Street youth in crisis need immediate support. Such crises include attempted suicide, being abused on the street or being suddenly without shelter. This support may be emotional or may involve taking the youth somewhere where he/she will feel safe. Therefore the Street Youth Task Force recommends:

22. THAT THERE BE PERSON(S) AVAILABLE TO RESPOND TO CRISIS OR EMERGENCY SITUATIONS ON A 24 HOUR BASIS, WITH ACCESS TO EMERGENCY BEDS.

Support to a National Transportation Network

Although Hamilton-Wentworth agencies usually service Hamilton-Wentworth street youth, there maybe a need in Hamilton to link up with a National

Transportation Network which assists street youth with finances, bus tickets, and support to return to families or alternatives as appropriate and desired. Therefore the Street Youth Task Force recommends:

23. THAT HAMILTON-WENTWORTH EXAMINE THE NEED TO ESTABLISH A TRANSPORTATION RESOURCE TO HELP STREET YOUTH RETURN HOME.

6.5 Substance Abuse

Gaps have been identified in existing services such as residential treatment, community-based treatment for substance abusing parents, and youth detoxification services.

Empowerment of youth to deal effectively with substance abuse is essential. Improved self-esteem, conflict and anger management, improved coping, social and problem solving skills, and offering health alternatives are all components. Therefore the Street Youth Task Force recommends:

- 24.A) THAT GAPS IN TREATMENT SERVICES NEED TO BE FILLED TO PROVIDE EFFECTIVE, APPROPRIATE INTEGRATED SERVICES FOR YOUTH AND THEIR FAMILIES;
- B) THAT STRATEGIES AND INTERVENTIONS FOR YOUTH AND FAMILIES BE SUPPORTED TO INCREASE PREVENTION OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE (E.G., SELF-ESTEEM);
- C) THAT SPECIAL DETOXIFICATION PROGRAMS BE MADE AVAILABLE TO YOUTH UNDER 18 YEARS OF AGE;
- D) THAT A RESIDENTIAL TREATMENT PROGRAM FOR "SUBSTANCE ABUSING YOUTH" BE ESTABLISHED, WITH READY ACCESS TO STREET YOUTH.

6.6 Protection

a) Sexual Abuse

Many street youth reported abuse as a causative factor to choosing life on the street. Prostitution is a street youth issue frequently associated with sexual abuse. A holistic approach with a multidisciplinary team, would provide the required continuum of community-based services. Investigation should be separate from treatment to provide comprehensive services for those sexually abused as well as the abusers. Therefore the Street Youth Task Force

recommends:

25. THAT EXISTING SERVICES FOR SEXUAL ABUSE BE SUPPORTED AND EXPANDED TO PROVIDE INTEGRATED, COMPREHENSIVE SCREENING, ASSESSMENT, TREATMENT, RESEARCH, AND EVALUATION; AND THAT COMMUNITY EDUCATION PROGRAM SERVICES BE DEVELOPED INCLUDING SERVICES SPECIFIC TO NEEDS IDENTIFIED FOR STREET YOUTH.

There is a high incidence of abuse amongst street youth. Street youth 16 - 18 years of age are often ignored by existing services. They are not young enough to fall under the Child Welfare Services yet they are not old enough for the adult system. Therefore the Street Youth Task Force recommends:

26. THAT INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP COUNSELLING PROGRAMS BE ESTABLISHED TO HELP STREET YOUTH 16 - 18 YEARS WHO ARE VICTIMS OF PHYSICAL, SEXUAL AND EMOTIONAL ABUSE.

b) Prostitution

Even though street youth may be involved with prostitution we found it difficult to assess the need for services as statistics are not necessarily reflective of the extent of the problem. Therefore the Street Youth Task Force recommends:

27. THAT MORE RESEARCH BE DONE TO DETERMINE THE EXTENT OF PROSTITUTION AMONGST "STREET YOUTH".

There needs to be a better balance between the rights of the child and the ability of society to protect the child. Children need special protection from themselves and others in the area of prostitution. Therefore the Street Youth Task Force recommends:

- 28.A) RELATIVE THE PROSTITUTION, THE DEFINITION OF "PROTECTION" IN THE CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES ACT BE INTERPRETED MORE BROADLY ON THE PART OF SERVICE PROVIDERS (INCLUDING POLICE AND THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM) WHO DEAL WITH THESE YOUTH;
- B) THAT PROSTITUTION AS IT AFFECTS YOUNG PEOPLE NEEDS TO BE ADDRESSED UNDER THE CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES ACT IN ADDITION TO THE CRIMINAL CODE;

- C) THAT CLIENTS OF THESE YOUNG PEOPLE SHOULD BE CHARGED WITH SEXUAL ABUSE OR THE APPROPRIATE CATEGORY OF SEXUAL ASSAULT.

c) Child Welfare Services

Existing shelters are being used for a number of child welfare placements. There is a shortage of appropriate space and placements. Therefore the Street Youth Task Force recommends:

29. THAT THE EXISTING CHILD WELFARE SERVICES BE ENHANCED TO PROVIDE ALTERNATIVE OR NEW WAYS OF DEALING WITH HARD-TO-SERVE ADOLESCENTS IN THEIR CARE.

d) Restrictive Environment

It is also necessary to look at the younger transient population e.g., 12 and 13 year olds, who are subject to all sorts of vulnerabilities due to their limited capabilities, resourcefulness, and level of maturity. Therefore the Street Youth Task Force recommends:

30. THAT WE NEED TO CONSIDER THE DEVELOPMENT OF LEGAL MEANS BY WHICH YOUNGER, TRANSIENT YOUTH WHO ARE IN NEED OF PROTECTION COULD BE PLACED IN A TEMPORARY, RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT, IN ORDER TO PROVIDE SAFETY AND ADDRESS THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE CHILD, SUBJECT TO JUDICIAL REVIEW.

6.7 Legislation

Although the Young Offenders Act, the Child and Family Services Act and the Education Act, seem to provide for a range of options to work with youth with special needs, in practice there are a great many limitations either because Acts are strictly interpreted or because of the operating policies of the child welfare agencies. Youth continue to "fall through the cracks" (e.g., chronic runners, those with severe behaviour problems, those nearing their 16th birthday). Therefore the Street Youth Task Force recommends:

31. THAT A PROVINCIAL TASK FORCE BE ESTABLISHED TO CRITICALLY EVALUATE THE LEGISLATION AFFECTING YOUTH UNDER THE AGE OF 18 YEARS AND RECOMMEND WAYS TO ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF HARD TO SERVE YOUTH.

Courts which deal with youth under various pieces of legislation (e.g., Child and Family Services Act, Young Offenders Act, Education Act) must consider referral to existing services and programmes in their decisions. Therefore the Street Youth Task Force recommends:

32. THAT THE JUDICIARY MUST FAMILIARIZE THEMSELVES WITH COMMUNITY RESOURCES AND BUILD THE USE OF THEM INTO THEIR DISPOSITIONS.

6.8 Disabled

The Task Force has not addressed the needs of street youth who are head injured, psychiatrically disabled or developmentally disabled. They have limited options in existing group or lodging homes because of "inappropriate" behaviour. These youth are particularly vulnerable to victimization by other street people. They may be verbally abused, assaulted, robbed (frequently for their medication) and prostituted. Their needs may be such that long term support is required. Therefore the Street Youth Task Force recommends:

- 33.A) THAT THE DISTRICT HEALTH COUNCIL ADDRESS THE SPECIAL NEEDS OF PSYCHIATRICALY DISABLED STREET YOUTH;
- B) THAT THE COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY HANDICAPPED ADDRESS THE SPECIAL NEEDS OF DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED STREET YOUTH;
- C) THAT THE APPROPRIATE FACILITIES ADDRESS THE SPECIAL NEEDS OF HEAD INJURED STREET YOUTH ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO ARE VIOLENT.

6.9 Primary Prevention

a) Systems/Societal Issues

Our children are our future. Activities which focus on primary prevention are an investment in the future and in the health of our community.

Enhancing self-esteem in our youth is essential for empowerment. This can result in youth making better decisions and assuming greater control and responsibility for their own lives and behaviours. Positive self-esteem and a strong self concept is needed. This begins with young children being supported by families, teachers and our community.

Innovative strategies with an evaluation component and measurable outcomes are needed to assist our youth to increase health enhancing behaviours. Therefore the Street Youth Task Force recommends:

34. THAT PRIMARY PREVENTION SERVICES SUCH AS PROGRAMMING IN THE SCHOOLS AND SELF-HELP GROUPS BE INCREASED AND STRENGTHENED IN HAMILTON-WENTWORTH.

b) Education about Street Life

Information and education about street life is a mechanism to provide a more accurate informed view to youth about the realities of street life.

Education should focus on prevention and alternatives. When possible, support should be provided to families to prevent youth from resorting to street life. There is a need to evaluate the effectiveness of new programs. Therefore the Street Youth Task Force recommends:

35. THAT THERE BE INFORMATION AND EDUCATION AVAILABLE FOR YOUTH ABOUT THE REALITIES OF STREET LIFE.

6.10 Parents

Research concerning parents of street youth was never intended to be a significant component of this report. A number of common themes emerged however but further exploration of parent issues are required.

One theme was the need to provide support and empower families to improve communication, life skills and social skills to enable them to cope more effectively with their children.

Another theme was the need for effective self-help and networking groups for parents. These could be located in child care centres, cultural centres, as well as after school programs. These programs should focus on promoting conflict resolution and problem solving skills. Therefore the Street Youth Task Force recommends:

- 36.A) THAT FURTHER EXPLORATION OF STREET YOUTH PARENT ISSUES BE CARRIED OUT;
- B) THAT THIS INFORMATION BE USED TO ESTABLISH PARENT EDUCATION, SUPPORT AND NETWORKING PROGRAMS INTENDED TO EMPOWER AND STRENGTHEN FAMILIES TO COPE MORE EFFECTIVELY WITH THEIR CHILDREN AND TO PREVENT THE ABUSE AND ABANDONMENT OF CHILDREN.

6.11 Conclusion

The Task Force believes that this report is a comprehensive needs assessment. The Task Force also believes the pieces of the puzzle have been outlined in the preceding 36 recommendations. It will take the formation of a planning committee (i.e., recommendation #2 a, b and c) to put the pieces of this puzzle together through a planning and development exercise. What is needed now is the financial commitment to ensure that these recommendations (i.e., the pieces of the puzzle) are implemented. The financial resources this community will spend now will result in long term social and financial benefits by preventing youth from fleeing to the streets and by freeing street youth from the pitfalls of homelessness, substance abuse, prostitution and emotional instability.

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APPENDIX A

OTHER DEFINITIONS OF STREET YOUTH

1. "There are a number of children who fall between 12-18 years of age, who for whatever reason, are unable to live at home. These teens move into a world isolated from mainstream society. They are usually uneducated, unskilled, and when they run, have no place to go. By the nature of their lifestyle, they will quickly become involved in deviant, and possibly illegal, behaviour in order to survive."

From Dead End
Margaret A. Michaud
1988 Detselig Enterprises Ltd.
Calgary, Alberta

2. "Street Youth" are persons under 21 who have left their parent's home and live off the streets - prostituting themselves, abusing drugs and alcohol, and having no real home."

June 8, 1988
Hamilton Journal

3. "Adolescents and young adults who live in families suffering from domestic violence, child abuse, incest and substance abuse are leaving home in increasing numbers. These children have often suffered physical, sexual and emotional abuse as well as spiritual rejection. Homeless transient youth are prone to commit crimes of prostitution, theft and drug dealing. These adolescents are often depressed and have high suicide rates. If they stay on the street for more than a year, they may wind up dead."

Homelessness in Hamilton-Wentworth
-A Discussion Paper
Prepared by: The Ad Hoc
Women's Hostels Group
Hamilton, Aug. 11, 1987

4. "Street Youth are young people who are under 16 years of age and who are engaged in prostitution or at risk of becoming engaged in prostitution."

Toronto Street Youth Project
Interim Evaluation Report
Dec. 1985

5. "Street Youth: The runaway and homeless youth without visible means of support."

Kids on the Street
have something to say:
Survey of Runaway & Homeless Youth.
Journal of Child Care
- Volume 3, Number 2

6. Transitional Age Youth document: Developing A unified response (MCSS) defines:

RUNAWAYS:

Young people who leave home to escape family violence, alcoholism, physical and sexual abuse too often find themselves living on the streets without supports and bearing the emotional scars of violent childhood.

THROWAWAYS:

Young people forced to leave their homes because of difficulties within their "reconstituted families" find themselves on the streets, without income, with few employment skills and no support networks in the community.

Both of these two populations are defined as being "on the streets".

Definitions are varied, and agreement to one definition may never come. We should live with our current definition but recognize that there are a multitude of options, perceptions and visions for how to meet the needs, on a continuum, for the young people who come to our attention in our various areas of service delivery.

APPENDIX B

PROJECT PROPOSAL

A Needs Assessment of "Street Kids" in Hamilton-Wentworth

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this project is to undertake a needs assessment of homeless youth in Hamilton-Wentworth, in conjunction with a basic information and referral service. This information and referral service will provide accurate service information to any homeless youth who request assistance during the course of the needs assessment.

The project will be undertaken at the request of the Community Street Youth Task Force of the Association of Agencies for Treatment and Development (A.A.T.D.). All project activities will be undertaken in conjunction with the work of this Task Force.

REPORTING SCHEDULE:

An interim report will be provided to the Task Force in June, 1989. The Task Force will then provide a report to the Regional Health and Social Services Committee. A final report will be prepared by the Social Planning and Research Council in August, 1989, for submission to A.A.T.D.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Two project staff will be hired and supervised by the S.P.R.C. to complete the following tasks:

- 1) Provide an overview of current services involved with "street kids".
- 2) Provide a descriptive profile of the target group based upon interviews of street kids, parents, service providers and one or more "symposiums" which will involve group discussion among street kids, parents and service providers pertaining to the service needs of street kids.
- 3) Provide a description of service requirements, based primarily upon the information gathered from street kids and parents.
- 4) Provide a basic source of service information to street kids who are involved in the needs assessment and who request information about service alternatives.

Direct supervision will be provided by Mike Pennock, Executive Director, and Gloria DeSantis, Researcher Director, of the Social Planning and Research Council.

BUDGET

Expenditures:

Salaries: 2 project staff	\$11,475.00
Benefits	1,148.00
Project Director	4,000.00
Transportation	337.00
Meals	340.00
Materials and Supplies	700.00
Secretarial Time	<u>1,000.00</u>
Total:	<u>\$19,000.00</u>

Revenues:

A.A.T.D.	7,500.00
Regional Social Services	7,500.00
S.P.R.C.	<u>4,000.00</u>
Total:	<u>\$19,000.00</u>

S.P.R.C. contribution is one day per week of professional staff time. S.P.R.C. will also be providing office space.

APPENDIX C

CHRONOLOGY OF TASK FORCE EVENTS

Activity	Responsibility of ...	Date
1. First meeting to do Terms of Reference and definition	Brother Richard, Art Grady, Elske Eybergen	Oct.25,1988
2. Examination of what we have and what needed (beginnings of Grid Committee)		Dec. 15
3. Committee reports and discussion re: involvement of Advisory Group in February. Minutes titled Community Street Youth Task Force for first time		Jan.9, 1989
4. Meeting re: street youth and parental involvement in Task Force	Task Force	January 12
5. S.P.R.C. introduced 3 phase project 1) collection of studies and agency data 2) validate summary of May 1988 symposium proceedings 3) carry out qualitative research methodology	S.P.R.C.	January 26
6. Memo from S.P.R.C. re: clarification of definition, goals, student researcher	S.P.R.C.	February 2
7. Discussed working definition, etc. First meeting of Advisory Committee		February 6
8. Presentation to Region		February 16
9. Initial discussion of research devices and possible targets	Task Force	April 3
10. Canterbury Hills full day workshop	A.A.T.D. and Task Force	April 25
11. Accessible services to youth research	Accessible Services to Youth Committee & S.P.R.C. Researchers	May - July
12. Legislation affecting youth	Legislation Committee	May - June
13. Literature review	Literature Committee	Jan. - June
14. Public meeting with youth downtown Hamilton	Needs Assessment Advisory Committee and S.P.R.C.	May 25

Activity	Responsibility of ...	Date
15. Presentation of Interim Report to A.A.T.D. Administration Team	Task Force, A.A.T.D. and S.P.R.C.	June 9
16. Presentation of Interim Report to Regional Health and Social Services Committee	Task Force, A.A.T.D. and S.P.R.C.	June 13
17. Public Meeting for Parents of Street Youth	Needs Assessment Advisory Committee and S.P.R.C.	June 26
18. Service Provider meeting to discuss services for the summer for youth	Task Force and A.A.T.D.	June 28
19. Conversations with youth on the street regarding their needs	S.P.R.C. researchers	June - July
20. Site visits to agencies serving street youth in other cities and considerations of service models	Task Force members and S.P.R.C. researchers	July
21. Agency data snapshots for July 1988, January 1989 and July 1989.	Task Force members and S.P.R.C.	July
22. Summary of May 1988 Service Provider Symposium results	S.P.R.C.	July
23. Report Writing	S.P.R.C.	July - Aug.
24. Parent of Street Youth radio program and phone in	Needs Assessment Advisory Committee and S.P.R.C.	August
25. Feedback from youth and Task Force on report	S.P.R.C. and Task Force	Aug - Sept.
26. Three committees formed to tie up loose ends of report (including mapping exercise, data, substantiation and research limitations)	Task Force Members	Sept.- Nov.
27. One day retreat to write recommendations	Task Force	Nov. 24
28. Editing and finalizing loose ends	Task Force	Dec.- Jan. 1990

APPENDIX D

MODELS OF INTERVENTION FROM OTHER COMMUNITIES

The Task Force intended this as a descriptive overview, not an evaluative summary, of services and programs in other areas of North America. (An evaluative summary would be the responsibility of an Implementation Team of the Task Force when deciding to develop a service model.) No information about the cost effectiveness of programs or their success rate because a) that data was not available when this report was being written, and b) this kind of data is not useful in isolation from other services and programs in those communities. That is, a particular service may work really well and be cost effective in Winnipeg because of the infrastructure of services available for youth but to then imply that it will be cost effective in Hamilton is not appropriate.

The intent of this section is to provide a descriptive overview of services and programs in other areas of North America. It was not intended that this section also include notations about the cost-effectiveness of these programs or their success rate. The major reason for this is because that level of information was not available at the time of this report writing and the Task Force had not intended to collect that level of detail.

A common statement made by communities embarking on community-based research and planning around a particular social concern is, "let's not re-invent the wheel". This refers to the need to discover what other communities are doing to remedy a particular social concern. In this instance, it was both necessary and important to understand the services available for the street youth population in other urban areas so that Hamilton-Wentworth could make informed choices about service structure. The report prepared by Brigham (1981) through A.A.T.D. is also important here because it reviews methods that have already been attempted and describes "alternative" programs for runaways.

The Task Force's goal was to understand the Hamilton-Wentworth community of street youth and then suggest appropriate service responses. Service decisions are made easier with an understanding of what seems to work in other communities. This section of the report contains summaries of various services for street youth in Canada and the United States. The first five descriptions

were extracted from Michaud's book Dead End (1988). The remaining descriptions were developed from other reports and site visits made by the researchers and Task Force members.

Before reading about these services there are some common themes regarding success with the street youth population. "Successful experiences" with the street youth population are summarized by Ray Edney (Michaud 1988:67). Successful services are those that are supportive and helpful as opposed to being punitive and controlling. Street youth favour service providers who are dependable, trusting and recognize the youth's need for independence and control in their lives.

"Street Youth run away from home in an effort to take control over lives which they have found untenable and unchangeable. They arrive on the streets with an understanding that there is no one who can help them and they are their own best caretakers. By this stage they trust no one, and their independence is of primary importance. Attempts to restrict and restrain them, and to ignore their needs and issues are futile, because this is precisely what they have run away from." (ibid)

1. Avenue Fifteen (Michaud 1988:73 - 84)

Where: Calgary, Alberta

Funding: Capital funds from Burns Memorial Fund and Rotary Club of west Calgary. Operating funds from province of Alberta Social Services.

Description:

- youth initiate their own admission, agree to accept individual and group counselling, respect shelter guidelines (through a contract) and begin working on setting realistic goals for themselves. The Centre will not accept unconditionally, street youth.
- the facility includes a 17 person residence (12 to 17 year olds), operates 24 hours per day, 365 days per year, provides 3 nutritious meals per day, teaches life skills (e.g., shelter and job searching skills, hygiene, financial planning, etc.) and provides medical assistance through medical students and mental health professionals who are prepared to volunteer their services.
- the Centre recognizes the importance of the family unit yet realizes families do have internal conflicts. The centre encourages street youth and families to seek assistance jointly by referring them to the appropriate agencies.

- in summary, it is a safe residential facility where staff and volunteers monitor and assist homeless youth.

2. Street Outreach Services (S.O.S.) (ibid, p.85 - 99)

Where: Toronto, Ontario

Funding: not noted

Description:

- it is based on the voluntary decision made by street youth (16 to 24 year olds) to leave street life. There are 3 main components.
- "Street Outreach Phase" - four street workers (they work Monday to Saturday until 11:00 p.m. or 1:00 a.m. depending on the time of year) walk the streets meeting youth and offering information, assistance and supportive counselling. A 24 hour emergency telephone service is available.
- "Office Drop-in and Youth Worker" - visits do not need to be scheduled and it is a non-pressured atmosphere. Youth talks things out, feel some warmth and get food and clothing. A limited drop-in centre where there are typically approximately 10 youth sitting around. They receive assistance in finding housing, employment, etc. (a phone is available for their use and there are bulletin boards).
- "High Support" - A young person is connected to a personal youth worker who works with him or her in the community for up to 15 hours per week. The youth has access to a peer support group and co-op boarding house. Welfare worker visits S.O.S. twice per week. AIDS worker is also available and sexuality groups meet once per week.

3. Downtown Eastside Youth Activities Society (D.E.Y.A.S.) (ibid, p.101 - 103)

Where: eastside of Vancouver, British Columbia

Funding: not noted

Description:

- D.E.Y.A.S. provides a broad-based education within the community regarding changing attitudes toward criminal activities in an area where there has been a large population of low income, immigrant and poorly-housed people for many years.
- the centre lobbies against alcohol abuse, poverty and unemployment

while assisting street youth.

- workers spend the majority of their time on the streets identifying children, acting as role models and making and following-up referrals.
- the centre does not focus on the worker-child relationship but instead on networking referrals and working with a variety of service providers offering the child a wider spectrum of assistance while discouraging the child from becoming dependent on any one individual for help.
- 3 repatriation workers do "hands on" returning of children to the communities from where they ran.
- 2 provincial public health nurses are housed in the same building and a clinic (in the same building) provides information on sexually transmitted diseases and intravenous drug users.
- once per week a Canada Employment counsellor works exclusively with native youth.

4. Orion Street Youth Theatre Project (ibid, p.105 - 111)

Where: Seattle, Washington

Funding: Private Industry Council

Description:

- it involves multi-agency collaboration (i.e., Catholic Community Services, Seattle Youth and Community Services, City of Seattle Youth Employment Education Program, the Private Industry Council and others).
- theatre is used as a therapeutic tool which allows youth the opportunity to engage in a structured activity (regarding employment preparation) over a period of 16 weeks (5 days per week, 7 hours per day). This includes an intensive work training experience including dance, music, life skills and job-readiness.
- they receive a modest training stipend, learn how to co-operate with others, understand what responsibility is and receive good work experience.
- after completing 16 weeks they receive help in finding employment.
- theatre and acting is attractive to youth.
- life skills (e.g., personal finance, surviving the grocery store, health, assertiveness training and conflict resolution), etc. usually

occur in the morning each day while music/dance/drama is scheduled for the afternoon.

- individual and group counselling is available throughout the 16 weeks.
- a public performance is made at the end of the 16 weeks.

5. The Bridge (ibid, p. 113 - 114)

Where: Boston, Massachusetts

Funding: not noted

Description:

- it is a multi-service agency for clients aged 14 to 21 years. During the past 17 years, the agency has managed to modify their services to meet the changing needs of street youth.
- it includes a streetwork team and a free medical van. They tour areas commonly frequented by young people and they offer their services.
- the agency offers food, temporary shelter, foster care, free medical services and dental services (during evenings).
- a 24 hour emergency hotline is available.
- pregnant youth receive assistance with proper nutrition, parenting skills, child care and development and life skills (individually and in groups).
- educational upgrading is provided (tutoring).
- a youth employment program employs 10 youth to work within the agency and learn job skills in preparation for entering the work force.
- an independent living program is also offered. This is a supervised residential program for youth who are either in school, job training, working or looking for work. They all share housekeeping responsibilities and contribute financially.

6. Youth Emergency Shelter Society (1987 - 1988)

Where: Edmonton, Alberta

Funding: United Way of Edmonton and Alberta Social Services.

Description:

- the Society provides 2 residential programs for youth under 18 years:
 - a) CR.A.SH program offers a place of safety where crisis intervention and reconciliation is undertaken. For youth on the street it is a place where food, clothing and shelter can be found.

b) ST.A.R.T program is for youth who want their situation assessed and referrals made. This program encourages the transition of the youth back into the community in a positive and productive way.

- services provided through the Society include crisis intervention, counselling, referral, food, clothing, advocacy, medical care, life skills, job placement, housing placement and youth assessment. The Society is connected with many different agencies.

7. Covenant House (site visit)

Where: Toronto, Ontario

Funding: Share Life Campaign of the Archdiocese of Toronto and other private donations. Money also comes from the Ministry of Community and Social Services.

Descriptions:

- primarily a crisis intervention service.
- it is a walk-in service for youth, open 24 hours per day, 7 days per week and offers 3 meals per day, clothing and shelter (30 beds).
- it is also a walk-in service for ex-residents of Covenant House providing food packages, tokens, counselling and various support groups.
- support services available to all youth who come to Covenant House include health care (nurses and doctor), clinical services, pastoral care, literacy, employment-oriented assistance and recreation.
- a runaway prevention program alerts students to the dismal realities of street life (through staff and volunteers).
- "On the Street" is a mobile support program that operates 6 nights per week between 2:00 a.m. and 7:00 a.m. It connects with youth that would never walk into an agency and reaches youth who are new on the street before pimps, etc. reach them.

8. Inner City Youth Program (site visit)

Where: Toronto, Ontario

Funding: Ministry of Community and Social Services, Metropolitan Toronto and Big Sisters Association (by private donation)

Description:

- operated by Huntley Youth Services

- street workers meet the youth in their own setting with "street packs" containing condoms, etc. Street workers do not attempt to get the youth off the street unless the youth indicate a desire to do so. The program is not meant to be intrusive. The street workers work out of a central, easily-accessed building (all staff alternate work between the office and the street).
- the program fulfils primarily a referral function - it has connections with many services.
- it offers some services at the facility including "workshops" on health, job readiness, life skills, AIDS and safe sex education, etc., using people from other agencies. Volunteer lawyers offer free legal counsel on a weekly basis.
- it is also a drop-in.

9. Mercury Youth Services (site visit)

Where: Toronto, Ontario

Funding: Ministry of Community and Social Services and private donations.
Hostel is funded by Metropolitan Toronto.

Description:

- this service deals with youth between the ages of 16 and 24 who are moving toward "independent living".
- when youth first come to Mercury workers ensure their basic needs are met first (this may include food vouchers for a cafe, arranging for shelter for the night and dealing with an immediate medical problem). There is no long intake required until after the first few visits.
- once a youth becomes a client of Mercury, more detailed information is sought and the youth is told that he/she should develop and "work toward a plan". Mercury believes youth must learn to take more responsibility for their lives.
- Mercury attempts to co-ordinate the various services with which the youth is involved.
- outreach workers go to hostels (not on the streets) to inform youth of Mercury's services.
- September 1989 may see the opening of a 48 bed hostel through Mercury.

10. St. Leonard's Society of Brant (site visit)

Where: Brantford, Ontario

Funding: Ministry of Community and Social Services and Ministry of Housing

Description:

- the Albion Street Residence is a 9 bed co-ed group home accommodating 16 and 17 year old resourceless youth. It is staffed 24 hours per day. The residence is committed to reducing the potential for crime through the provision of services for offenders and special needs youth.
- the focus is on independence and life skills training along with intensive follow-up and aftercare programming.
- education/vocational counselling, drug and alcohol assessment, life skills training, literacy assessment and training and recreation/leisure management are all included.
- referrals are accepted from community agencies, parents and adolescents themselves through the Residential Placement Advisory Committee (RPAC).
- an intensive discharge plan is utilized; the resident develops an individual approach to re-integration in the community. Assistance is provided regarding securing shelter, furnishings and other necessities. After discharge, regular follow-up and supportive counselling is provided.

11. Summary and Conclusions

In general, there are a number of common characteristics across the nine models:

- 24 hour operation with drop-in status and street worker outreach activities (including mobile vans in a couple instances during the night) was very common.
- the majority of services
 - make referrals to other agencies
 - provide food on site
 - provide health assessments, care and clinical services on site
 - provide life skills assistance (e.g., conflict resolution, literacy, etc.)
- a few number of services have a residential component, a 24 hour

emergency telephone line, peer supports and require youth to be willing to have some kind of intervention.

It is evident that services for street youth require less structure and a need to go beyond a typical work day. For example, a youth may be ready to make a major decision about his/her future at 1:00 a.m. as he/she sits in a coffee shop, but if there is no agency open at that hour to talk with the youth about options, the youth may not be as interested in similar discussions later that day (i.e., after 9:00 a.m.). There is also a need to deal with youth's basic needs quickly (e.g., food, shelter and in some instances health care) through in-house services or appropriate referrals. A holistic perspective on youth's needs is also important. The modification of an existing service in Hamilton or the development of a new service requires careful consideration of these summary points.

APPENDIX E

LIST OF AGENCIES AND THEIR ACRONYMS

Adolescent Community Care Program - ACCP

Adult Basic Education

Alanon-Alateen

Alcohol and Drug Addiction Program of Halton - ADAPT

Alcohol and Drug Assessment Services

Alcoholics Anonymous

Alternatives for Youth - AY

Association of Agencies for Treatment and Development - AATD

Catholic Children's Aid Society - CCAS

Catholic Family Services

Chedoke Child and Family Centre

Chedoke-McMaster Hospitals

Child and Adolescent Services

Children's Aid Society - CAS

Community Information Service - CIS

Delta Lee

Good Shepherd Centre

Hamilton AIDS Network for Dialogue and Support - HANDS

Hamilton General Hospital

Hamilton Native Women's Centre

Hamilton-Wentworth Board of Education

Hamilton-Wentworth Roman Catholic Separate School Board

Hamilton-Wentworth Regional Social Services

Henderson Hospital

John Howard Society

Martha House

Mary Ellis House

Men's Detox

Mission Services

Mohawk Job Readiness

Narcotics Anonymous - NA

Operation Blessing

Pastoral Counselling Centre

Public Health Nursing

Reginald Gardiner Lodge

Regional Indian Centre

St. Joseph's Hospital

St. Matthew's House

St. Simeon House

Salvation Army

Sexual Assault Centre

Sexually Transmitted Disease Clinic - STD Clinic

Teen Challenge

Telecare

Webber House

Wentworth County Board of Education

Wesley Urban Ministries

Women's Detox

Young Men's Christian Association - YMCA

Young Women's Christian Association - YWCA

Youth Employment Centre - YEC

APPENDIX F

ITEMS FOR RESEARCHERS TO DISCUSS WITH STREET YOUTH

ONE-ON-ONE

Revised June 1, 1989

(Based on May 5th themes, the themes discussed at the Youth Public Forum and discussed May 30th by Needs Assessment Sub-committee. This list is meant to be a mental checklist, not a formal questionnaire for the researchers.)

* Age and Sex

1. If you had the chance to run your own agency, what would you develop?
2. What services are you using/have you used in the past?
3. What services do you like? Why?)
4. What services do you not like? Why?) Probe beyond personalities, etc.
5. What kind of services would you use?
6. What kind of agency do you feel most comfortable approaching?
7. Have you and/or your family had contact with the Children's Aid Society, group home and/or foster home? If so, how old were you?
8. What would you need if you wanted to get off the street?
9. What are the scariest things that happen to you on the street? (probe re: drugs, alcohol, violence...)
10. What are you getting from the streets that you didn't get at home? (What's the best thing about living on the street?)
11. Where do you usually eat/sleep?
12. Where do you go for medical attention? What did you need but you didn't get?
13. What do you do for fun and where do you do it (recreation)?
14. Where do you get your money from and why?
15. Have you moved around a lot lately? (probe for migration patterns)
16. Why did you leave home (probe for "push" and "pull" factors)? When (if you go back) and why do you go home?

Perhaps a checklist of items can be formulated, based on the above, to then summarize, for example, how many youth were male/female, their age groups, contact with child welfare system, etc.

It is also intended that the questions which could elicit incriminating information be asked in the third person.

APPENDIX G

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE DATA COLLECTION METHOD AND ANALYSIS

Overview

The conversations with street youth took place in the summer months from June to August. We, the researchers, were usually on the street between 4:30 p.m. and midnight when most of the youth were present. Although this was generally the case, we also spent time "hanging" on the street during the day and specifically in the afternoon. Periodic all-night shifts (between 11:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.) were also undertaken to ensure a more comprehensive sample. As well, we made ourselves available at suspected places (e.g., Gage Park and top of Jackson Square) that street youth sleep during the early morning (i.e., when the sun was coming up) to interview more destitute youth. Generally speaking, however, the evening times (and specifically Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights when more people tend to be on streets) were the most optimum for meeting the youth.

We found street youth concentrated on the corner of John and King Streets and on the steps of Jackson Square. Video arcades and fast food joints were the main attractions. As we gained more information from the street youth (via the street interviews and at the Street Youth Forum) we moved eastward away from the downtown core and into some of the malls. We found no street youth in the suspected east end neighbourhoods outside of the malls. In the malls, street youth hang out near the video arcades and in the food serving areas; however, their numbers there were very small (approximately 5 to 8 total). Consequently, we concentrated our efforts in the downtown core where there was a higher population of youth.

Initially, making contact was very difficult. It took at least three weeks for us to become familiar faces on the block. We dressed casually and showed willingness to initiate contact in order to be considered approachable by the youth. Often they approached us simply because we were familiar faces. We also found that taking a youth for a coffee or a burger and/or providing a cigarette to be good icebreakers that helped to establish rapport. Friendships on the street are based largely upon the satisfaction of needs, and we tried to capitalize on this by sharing food and cigarettes. At no time, however, did we

try to hide what we were doing and the purpose of our research.

Informality was very important. Often, discussions with the youth did not cover the project requirements at all, but they served to advance group acceptance and deepen the level of acquaintances. This we think led to a greater trust and openness. The questions asked were non-threatening, participation was voluntary and anonymity (we did not record their names or other identifying information) was assured. Notetaking varied, depending on the situation or the subject and their level of comfort. Either notes were taken 1) during the conversation, 2) after the conversation in the same area or 3) written down at home or back at the office. Respondents' comments were recorded verbatim as much as possible. We also looked for recurrent themes. Two researchers on the project tended to increase accuracy of reporting because we were able to double check each other's interpretations. As well, information gleaned from previous conversations and from the Street Youth Meet and our interpretations of this were double checked with youth throughout the process; we also took a draft of our analysis back to the streets in August for their feedback to ensure our interpretation was appropriate.

Because the street youth population is highly transient and not clearly defined, youth were accessed through word of mouth, introduction and by finding out who was or was not a street youth simply by "hanging out" and gaining familiarity and acceptance among the various sub-groups of youth in the community. There are many youth on the street who cannot be defined as street youth. They often interact with street youth (e.g., "hanging" downtown) but do not take their main supports from the street and live most often at home. Care was taken to separate this group. We collected no information from these youth but often used them to direct us to more appropriate respondents.

Analysis of Data

All written records were kept in tact and reviewed weekly so that we could be better aware of recurrent and emerging themes in the information. Again checking this information and our interpretation of it with the youth themselves was extremely important for both the collection and analysis of the data.

Once the research was complete (which was largely decided by time considerations but also significantly by the fact that we were beginning to hear the same suggestions and comments over and over without any new information) we started a more indepth analysis of the material. Notes were read and re-read and the data viewed from several different perspectives (e.g., who was making the statement, in what context was it presented, etc.) in order to gain a clear picture of the youth's suggestions. Comments that may not have been explicitly defined by the youth but appeared continuously throughout the data were recorded as well.

As themes began to emerge, whether they were items that were implicit, similar in meaning, or colloquial expressions that were used continuously, we were able to form several categories in which to put our information. These categories were defined and redefined as more of the data were sorted.

It was necessary to re-write the verbatim responses, the suggestions for change, and the various recurrent themes in order to better organize the material. Thus we took the original data (first recorded case by case), our interpretations of the data and the themes that appeared to cross the majority of the cases and recorded them in categories on separate pieces of paper. Some pieces of information were appropriate to more than one category and were coded under each. Some categories were eventually collapsed because of their similarity with each other in order to simplify and better understand the data. All categories were labelled appropriately and as simply as possible.

Some apparent contradictions in the data surfaced in our analysis. Further investigation, however, revealed that these were not contradictions but rather, discrepancies in the way one sub-group of youth perceived their situation versus another (i.e., transitional youth versus non-transitional youth). Thus, it was consistent with our categorization.

In the end, most of the information gleaned from our conversations was included in this report. The little data that was left was highly idiosyncratic and represented more the personal view of only a few youth than it did of the group as a whole.

We, as researchers, were key to the analysis of the data. Because we had spent a few months working closely with street youth we were able to analyze the data within the context that it was collected. Thus we were able to interpret the data differently depending on how the data was solicited, who was there, how much of our own interpretation was necessary to understand the information and indeed our own influence of the street youth population and their environment. These are all important considerations in our analysis.

Finally, we used our familiarity with the data and the population to prioritize the data (i.e., shelter being of higher priority than food, etc.) We based this process not solely on the number of instances within a category but also on when this information surfaced, under what circumstances and according to how emphatically the youth spoke. For example, in most of the conversations with youth, when we first started talking about needs, the youth would typically begin the discussion with the shelter topic. Since there were 2 researchers we were able to ask about each other's interpretation and check for bias.

Ethical Issues

In order to avoid the responsibility of having to disclose incriminating material, we asked questions in the third person. For example, instead of saying "Did you ever sell drugs?" they would say "Do many youth sell drugs to survive?". We did witness some petty crimes on the street but it was best not to get involved especially since they were not life and death issues. Our credibility would have been at stake in case of intervention or apprehension. We also met many runaways on the street, but we were under no obligation to report these youth to CAS or the police because we were not acting in an agency capacity; this worked to our benefit because it again increased the level of trust. Nonetheless we did give these youth periodic advice and suggested referrals (e.g., to the Good Shepherd) when appropriate. The advice was generally of a supportive nature and consisted of such things as encouragement in looking for jobs, suggestions on how to deal with welfare workers, etc. This aspect of our work accounted for only roughly 5 - 10% of our time, and we provided no follow-up to this. The youth were free to take or leave our advice and we were careful not to set ourselves up as "street workers" per se. The purpose of our work was always made clear.

APPENDIX H

NOTES FROM TASK FORCE MEMBERS WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE STREET YOUTH PUBLIC MEETING

Recorder #1

Not necessarily in this order

1. Shelter a) a place to go when first out (mostly females)
 b) longer time at shelters or more shelters i.e., safe house
2. Money a) better system of getting welfare
 b) more welfare funds for students so they don't have to work all their spare time just to make ends meet
 c) affordable housing for young singles without children without first and last rent
3. Welfare a) parents should not have to approve welfare for 16 and over, many parents feel the system won't see them as good parents if they agree
4. More information as to their rights, how to deal with systems etc.
5. Food benefits for singles, most shelters only give out to families
6. More support systems for people still at home, going to school but not getting along with parents
7. Better long term training (i.e., apprentice programs)
 - Futures program not working it's too short, pay starts too late for someone on the streets and youth still can't get work after they are done
 - Current apprentice programs, employers lay off young people as soon as they reach a point of getting increases
8. O.H.I.P. coverage for younger people - a dental, medical and pharmacy clinic free for street people
9. More open air meets with music

It was generally agreed that emergency shelter where nobody would report them was near the top of the list with affordable housing in general almost equal in importance - subsidized with no last month's rent. Next and most often mentioned next to housing is better welfare for youth or singles.

An item that may not fall within our mandate but which all young people stated when asked why they didn't stay in their group homes or foster homes is that there were too many rules but not enough useful things learned. Most young people felt that nobody cared about them in these facilities and the only reason they even looked for them was because they wanted to be paid.

Needs Expressed

1. Source of money (particularity if under 16) (small amounts daily?)
2. Cheap, clean housing/rooms (hostels = roaches and lousy food)
3. Less Police hassling i.e., Amnesty from:
 - a) loitering tickets
 - b) late night prowling - less curfew
4. A registry?/mail drop?/information centre
 - to provide an address for employers/peers/welfare when necessary (Covenant House model)
5. Needs I suspect:
 - a) parents
 - b) cuddles

- wanted a home and if they couldn't go home, they wanted a place where people cared for them as people
- (girl) problems with alcoholism at home, so she went on the street
 - difficulty getting cleaned and getting clothes washed
 - need for service in this regard
- sense of abandonment by system
- (male involved in prostitution in Toronto) pulled onto street by the attractiveness of the money he could make
 - street was a place where he felt accepted
- difficult to go to shelters if under 16 and not connected
- alcohol abuse (by parents) was a major reason for leaving home

Recorder #4

- spoke with 6 males, 14 - 22 years of age

What would make life easier on the street?

- make welfare easier for people under 16
- relax restrictions on shelters
- donate clothes for youth on the street
- issue meal tickets for food
- make no frills, cheap apartments available
- safe houses with rules e.g., no strangers after 1:00 p.m.
- drop-in centres, open all the time
- recreation programs
- signs indication of hostels
- place to put valuables
- extension of the limits for staying at a hostel
- shelters should provide day time bed for people working nights
- mailing address for people who need jobs

What would you need to get off the street?

- jobs
- caring people to confide in and talk to at a centre
- recreation programs at drop in centres to keep youth off the street
- lots of youth new on street do not know what their first move is, good advice can put them back on track

Personal Impressions

Overall, I was impressed by the youth's willingness and ability to discuss the nature of their situation and to delineate those things which might help to improve it. I was encouraged by their high level of trust in us as well as their good behaviour in general. It is clear to me that although frequently labelled as such, this group of youth should not be seen as a bunch of "trouble-makers" - troubled, maybe - sad, certainly - bad, no way!

Getting Off the Street

Of the three themes which we identified for discussion, this was the one which I received the most information about. This is interesting in itself and I believe indicates the desire which these youth have to get off the street. The issues which we discussed can be grouped into three areas - housing, jobs and access to information.

Housing - most of the youth which I spoke with have a variety of temporary housing arrangements which often includes staying for short periods of time with various family members, friends and casual acquaintances. Many spend at least some nights without any form of shelter and it was noted by some of the youth at the forum that as of the time we spoke (about 6 p.m.), they were unsure where they would be sleeping that night.

The solution to this problem presented by the youth involved some form of subsidized (free?) housing which would allow them to get their feet on the ground. This could be a room in a house with rules but probably no form of enforced programming.

Jobs - some youth presented a lack of money as being a primary reason as to why they're on the street. Some felt that easier access to training (apprenticeships, etc.) might help while other ideas revolved around easier access to "decent" paying jobs. Although there are agencies around town designed to help youth find jobs and training, it seems that street youth aren't using them. We need to ascertain why.

Information - most of the children I spoke to are not aware of the services presently available to help them. There appears to be a need for some form of central information bank which can be easily accessed by these youth.

Life on the Streets

I was able to determine two things which would make life easier for youth currently on the street. These are some form of recreation area and again, access to information.

Recreation - street youth appear to have no place to "hang-out". Because they have little or no money. They are unable to access traditional forms of recreation such as movies, going to bars, etc. As a result, they end up talking to one another, often in groups, and due to boredom, sometimes get a little boisterous. This often ends up with what the youth see as police harassment. Obviously, these youth need somewhere to go and have fun. That does not appear to presently exist in our community.

Information - easy access to information on such topics as birth control, safe sex and basic health care, to name a few, does not appear to be available to these youth. Again, some form of information bank would seem to be needed.

Wrap-Up

The Street Youth Forum has, in my view, provided an excellent starting point for a worthwhile project. As I stated at a previous meeting, these youth have a lot of energy which I hope we will find ways of tapping into. It is my hope that by involving them in this project, the street youth of our community will see the final result as being something for which they feel some ownership. It would be a shame if we developed some form of service which these youth did not see as relevant.

Interviewed = 9 males
 Age Range = 13 to 21 years

Place of Residence: The 2-13 year olds that were interviewed are residing in a Group Home. One of the 13 year olds has been on the run for the past month and staying with friends or on the street.

One 18 year old is presently residing with his mother but had lived on the streets off and on for about 5 years. Another 18 year old has recently found a job and is working even though he has no fixed address.

The 21 year old (ex-street youth) has a residence and is on welfare. He chose the streets because of money & excitement and was able to get off the streets on his own eventually through prostitution.

The remaining 4 males (ages 15-18) stay in hostels (when there is a bed available) with friends when possible or on the streets.

Reasons for Attending the Forum:

1. Free food
2. Curiosity
3. Concern for the younger street children

Awareness of Services:

All nine males were not aware of Services available to them except for Wesley. Urban ministries, C.C.A.S., C.A.S. and the Good Shepherd Centre and of course Welfare.

Suggestions from the Youth:

1. "A Safe House" where youth can go anytime of day to get off the street to:
 1. Sleep
 2. Shower
 3. Wash Clothes
 4. Medical Attention
 5. Talk to a Counsellor "who cares".

The youth did not object to "basic rules" for a "Safe House" to keep order. The youth also suggested that the "Safe House" be staffed with ex-street people or Social Workers that "care".

2. Another Forum: To attract other youth and information sharing.

Money: Money is not an issue with most of the kids. Since one has to have a place of residence to obtain Welfare they don't bother applying. Most of them obtain funds by illegal means (i.e. prostitution, etc.) which amounts more than what they would get from welfare.

Reasons for being on the street

1. All but the 21 year old youth, left home due to family problems (physical abuse, substance abusive parents). Several youth were thrown out of their homes.

Additional Information:

The youth were pleased with the Forum because:

1. There were people (counsellors) "who cared" and were prepared to listen to them.
2. "No strings attached"
3. "A safe gathering", no hustles from police or "street drunks".
4. Food and Drinks
5. They in turn became aware of services available to them.
6. The youth seemed to trust the Task Force members and disclosed very personal issues and confessed to crimes that they had committed.

RE: STREET YOUTH MEET.

- spoke with 2 groups - 9 males
- all were 17 years of age or older - but all were under 21 years of age
- 2 had spent approx. 6 months on the streets in Toronto within the last 2 years
- both stated that there was a difference between life on the streets in T.O. and Hamilton: T.O. - more drugs, less violent, easier to get Welfare: Hamilton - drugs are less readily available, more violence on the streets, difficult to get Welfare
- 2 had spent time in the College Institute in T.O. (Psychiatric facility) within the last 6 years
- of these 2 - one says he still goes through 'major' bouts of depression but has no-one he trusts enough to talk with - says he has learned to deal with it on his own
- of the 9 all had at least spent some time on the street
- 2 of the 9 are presently living at home with a parent and have gone back to school
- 6 are staying with friends and/or other "street acquaintances" - 1 of them says he can stay with family periodically - but it's a 2 or 3 day maximum
- 1 is presently living at the Y but will have to leave at the end of next week (lack of funds), he will not qualify for Welfare as had to quit his job, so will more than likely be back out on the street or may be able to stay with some friends, says he will look for another job
- all felt that get-togethers like "this one" were great - "a chance to eat and talk to people that are OK"

"What would make life easier on the street?"

- a place where you could 'drop-in and hang-out'; talk with someone who at least looked like they cared; who didn't ask you a lot of questions but would listen to you and who wouldn't make you wait 1, 2 or 3 weeks before they could see you
- :some place where you wouldn't be automatically judged by appearance
- :would talk about whatever you wanted to talk about, could give you ideas about what you could do but not someone who told you what you had to do
- some place to wash clothes
- money
- most said they would like a job
- Welfare should have less rules and be easier to get

"What do you need to get off the street?"

- welfare
- job - money - 1st and last months rent
- someone or someplace who would loan money for 1st and last months rent (most said they would try to pay it back)
- someone who would "listen" and "cared"
- a temporary residence "like a shelter" but for people under 21 years of age
- :you could stay as long as you needed to "get it together"
- :it would be more private than a shelter
- : would need some rules but they would have to be different from the rules that some of the shelters have

"What do you need to stay off the street?" (for those contemplating a move to the street)

- parents and/or some other family member that cared
- a job that paid more than minimum wage

...continued

Other

- health care - most said that if they were sick (while on the street) that you just learn to live with it unless it got really bad at which point they would and/have gone to a hospital
- most thought that this "meet" was a good idea - should happen at least once per month
- suggested that they would spread the word to others that it was "cool" - some had debated with their friends whether or not to show-up to this meet.
- most seemed impressed that the police would not hassle them during the meet.
- most were not aware of the services available to them
- they were most aware of Welfare and the Shelters only

APPENDIX I

SUMMER 1989 AGENCY SNAPSHOTS

Most agencies collect data on their clients. In order to understand the street youth who are already using services, agencies were asked to pull together historical and current data. This would also help the Task Force understand which agencies deal with the largest street youth population.

Seventeen members of the Task Force were sent a three page questionnaire to complete at the beginning of July. The questionnaire focused on historical data (July 1988 and January 1989) and current data (July 1989) and included age and sex, key life history descriptors and a question about agency staff's insights about their data.

Follow-up telephone calls were made to most of the agencies at the end of July with an offer to assist with the data assemblage. Twelve completed data forms were returned to the Social Planning and Research Council. Telephone calls were made to most of these agencies to ensure the researchers were interpreting the numbers correctly. The remaining 6 questionnaires were not completed because of staff turnover in those agencies, summer holidays for some staff who could not meet the timeline and an inability to pull the data from existing files because the data is not categorized via "street youth" status.

The analysis of this data was complicated because of a number of factors. First, not all the agencies could provide historical data because of deactivated (and therefore hard-to-retrieve) client files. Second, there was no method to eliminate or even reduce double reporting of street youth across agencies. Thus, the data forwarded by agencies cannot be summed to arrive at a total number of street youth in Hamilton-Wentworth. Third, in some agencies there is no computerized data base so interviews with each staff person would have been necessary (this would have been a large task). Fourth, agencies do not create client files based on a "street youth status" designation. Thus file searches are not useful but discussions with staff are. The data from the agencies were summarized in a matrix and highlights of these data were stated.

Table 1 summarizes the data collected from 12 Task Force agencies. The boxed numbers contain the number of street youth each agency had during a particular time period without double reporting these youth. Of importance here is a general increase in the total number of street youth between July 1988 and January 1989. A brief overview of these data can be presented here.

The Police Department has a large number of missing persons under the age of 16. The Youth Division noted that approximately 600 youth were reported missing in 1988. This includes lost children, runaways, abductions, those from group homes who were not in for curfew and those reported missing several times. Thus there are not necessarily 600 street youth in Hamilton.

Wesley Centre also serves a large number of youth. For the month of January 1989 approximately 250 youth visited Wesley Centre for recreation, counselling or the quiet room (containing newspapers for job and apartment hunting). Wesley Centre estimates that approximately 250 youths also would have "dropped-in" for food at the same time. For one week in July, Wesley Centre reported 110 youths using their programs (not necessarily the food drop-in because statistics are not maintained to the same extent at the food drop-in). The youth reported here fit the definition of street youth outlined in section 1.0 of this report.

The Regional Social Services Department (Income Maintenance Division) reported a conservative estimate of 143 street youths for the month of July 1989. This number includes only the number of street youth who have applied for welfare. Thus, there could be a number of other youth, primarily those under the age of 16 who know they are not eligible for welfare, that are not counted in this 143.

Agencies were not only asked about the numbers of street youth they served. They were also asked about the key life history descriptors of the youth they see, the reasons the youth went to the agency and insights that agency staff wanted to share about their data.

The majority of agencies (75%, 9 of 12 agencies) noted family abuse or family violence as the most common life history descriptor among their street

youth clients. Other key, life history descriptors that were mentioned by at least half of the sampled agencies included drug and alcohol problems and separated and/or reconstituted families (including parent-child conflict and rejection). Appendix ? contains a further breakdown of these indicators.

Agencies specified a variety of reasons why street youth came to their agencies. Agencies listed reasons that were primarily related to the services they provide.

The insights agencies shared about their data were very useful to the Task Force. First the numbers of street youth reported are probably low because agencies are not aware of all the street youth in their own system and out there and the data do not always include the anonymous phone calls made by youth looking for information. Second, the 16 to 20 year old group is very difficult to serve. Third, youth often turn to their peers for help before turning to the service system. Finally, there is a growing number of individuals lacking support and resources for dealing with their situation; present services need to be made more readily available and well advertised.

TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF AGENCY SNAPSHOTS

Source	Entire Year 1988	Month of July 1988	Month of Jan. 1989	Month of July 1989	Week of July 16, 1989
1. Regional Police Dept. - missing persons under 16 years of age	- 1745 occurrence 720 F 1025 M - about 600 youth responsible for these occurrences	-	-	-	-
2. Charlton Hall	-	5 F, under 16 (55%) [5]	2 F, under 16 (33%) [2]	-	2 F, under 16 [2]
3. Adolescent Community Care	-	2 F } 16- 3 M } 20 yr. (58%) [5]	7 F } 16- 4 M } 20 yr. (46%) [11]	-	1 F, under 16 3 F } 16-20 3 M } yr. [7]
4. Alternative for Youth	-	1 M } under 16 1 F } 5 M } 16- 5 F } 20 yr. 3 M, 21-25 yr. (11%) [15]	1 M, under 16 5 F } 16- 8 M } 20 yr. 6 M } 21- 1 F } 25 yr. (16%) [21]	-	2 M, 16-20 yr. [2]
5. Hamilton Wesley House	-	none	none	-	none
6. Good Shepherd Centre	-	1 M under 16 18 M, 16-20 yr. 21 M, 21-25 (32%) [40]	1 M under 16 24 M, 16-20 yr. 19 M, 21-25 yr. (39%) [45]	-	21 M, 16-20 29 M, 21-25 [50]
7. Regional Social Services Dept. (Income Maint.)	-	data not accessible due to deactivated files		1 F under 16 76 M } 16- 67 F } 20 yr. [143] many workers were on & off holidays so data are incomplete	-
8. Hamilton-Wentworth Roman Catholic School Board	-	N/A	19 F } under 11 M } 16 3 F } 16-20 3 M } (30%) [36]	-	N/A
9. Martha House (Women's Residence)	-	2 F under 16 16 F, 16-20 4 F, 21-25 (33%) [22]	2 F under 16 8 F, 16-20 5 F, 21-25 (31%) [15]	-	1 F, under 16 6 F, 16-20 3 F, 21-25 [10]
10. Wesley Centre (for the programs provided not the drop-in)	-	[118] M & F (age not specified) (15 to 20%)	[250] M & F (age not specified) (32%)	-	6 M } under 16 11 F } 39 M } 16-20 5 F } 40 M 21-25 9 F [110]
11. Chedoke Child & Family Centre (includes Cool School and Adolescent Team)	-	2 F } 16-20 2 M } (2-3%) [4]	4 F } 16-20 4 M } (2-3%) [8]	-	2 F } 16-20 2 M } [4]
12. Mission Services (Men's Residence)	-	5 M, 16-20 11 M, 21-25 (19.5) [16]	14 M, 16-20 10 M, 21-25 (36.4%) [24]	-	no response

Legend

- = question not asked

M = male

F = female

() = percentage of all agency's clients who are street youth

[] = total number of street youth for that agency for that time period

N/A = not applicable

